



# *The Peak*

**The Quebec  
'Student' Strike!**

**Volume 52 | Issue 1**

## So what is this rag?

This is The Peak, a magazine presenting stories, analysis and ideas disseminated from grassroots and peoples' struggles. What you hold in your hand is the first issue of our 52nd volume. Wow! We are old and yet we are still fighting for that revolution we hold so dear. We publish The Peak 8 times a year, soliciting content from the Guelph community and broader grassroots struggles.

Throughout this issue, we have speckled a well-researched article combining street analysis and reporting from the Quebec Student Strike which has (literally) rocked the city of Montreal with an anti-capitalist upheaval and constant disruptions to the economy as usual. "When the Iron is Hot: Student Strike and Social Revolt in Quebec" (page 2, 13, and 26) provides the anglo world its first real glimpse of an under-reported struggle which has mobilized millions of people.

We have also teamed up with the Guelph Student Mobilization Committee (GSMC) to disseminate some of their analysis on the Student Strike in Quebec and some inspiration to bring the struggle home. Roisin Lyder outlines in "Fighting for Equality" (page 35) some of the ways tuition keeps the rich educated in the ivory towers while the rest of us are shit (or shut) out of luck. Get in touch with the GSMC at [student.mobilization@gmail.com](mailto:student.mobilization@gmail.com) if building a student strike in Ontario & Guelph is your thing, 'cause it isn't going to get any better for us if we don't strike back.

In Padraic O'Brien's "A Short History of the Quebec Student Movement" (page 10), we are provided a glimpse of the rich history of struggle which has lead to the most recent student revolt.

Admittedly, one of the biggest criticisms of the student strike in Quebec has been the limited goals of reduced/free tuition as a vehicle to communicate a broader critique of a social system which leaves so many of us struggling get by while a select few live off the riches. The student strike has radicalized thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people in Quebec and elsewhere to target the root cause of these disparities in society: capitalism. We need to organize ourselves beyond a student struggle on the many fronts where our freedom, time & autonomy are commodified and threatened. But where can we meet others like us?

A great place for friends and conspirators of all sorts to meet one another is at the radical social centre downtown, The Square ([www.thesquareguelph.com](http://www.thesquareguelph.com)). There is at least one event every day for the month of September, so you got no excuse not to come out and meet people, find future comrades and talk about how to confront all the problems this world has left us to deal with. Check out their Calendar on the inside back cover.

Yours in struggle for total freedom,  
*The Peak Collective*

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## The Quebec “Student” Strike

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# While the Iron is **Hot**

## Student Strike & Social Revolt 2012

### WHILE THE IRON IS HOT PART I

Check out images and Videos on the online version at [guelphpeak.org](http://guelphpeak.org)

*This is the first of a two part series; for an analysis of the events described herein, read While the Iron Is Hot: Anarchist Analysis of the Revolt in Québec online, Check out page 72 for details.*

**I**n February 2012, as the Occupy movement tapered off, a strike broke out against austerity measures in the Québécois higher education system. Prevented from occupying buildings as it had in 2005, the student movement shifted to a strategy of economic disruption: blockading businesses, interrupting conferences and tourist events, and spreading chaos in the streets. At its peak, the resulting unrest surpassed any protest movement in North America for a generation.

In this comprehensive report, we chart the strike action by action, from its

awkward beginnings through the high point of the revolt and the emergency measures with which the government attempted to suppress it. At each stage in its development, we explore why the strike assumed the forms it did, and analyze the forces competing to push it forward, suppress it, or coopt it. Like the Oakland port blockade of November 2nd, 2011, the strike suggests a path forward out of the strategic impasse resulting from the Occupy evictions; it also demonstrates that building a capacity for confrontation is an infrastructural project, no less so than any community institution.



# Cast of Characters / Glossary of Terms

The **CÉGEP system** is composed of every *collège d'enseignement général et professionnel*, or **cégep**, in the province of Québec. Most Québécois students enter these schools at age seventeen, at the same time that students elsewhere in North America would be entering the twelfth grade. There are two main options at cégep: *pre-university programs*, which usually last two years, and *vocational training programs* which usually last three years and provide students with some kind of trade certificate at the end. For anarchists, the most interesting characteristic of cégeps is that they are full of teenagers who aren't yet quite as jaded as their older peers, and understand that criminal records before the age of eighteen are less serious.

**FÉCQ**, the Federation of Québécois College (i.e., Cégep) Students, and **FÉUQ**, the Federation of Québécois University Students, are two separate student federations that represent most students in the province of Québec. Although they represent different demographics, their politics and internal structures are very similar.

**ASSÉ**, the Association for a Syndical Student Solidarity, is the other student federation in Québec, representing students at both cégeps and universities. Unlike its counterparts FÉCQ and FÉUQ, the *raison d'être* of ASSÉ is to achieve free and universally accessible education in the province. Its analysis has always been feminist and anti-neoliberal, but not anti-capitalist.

Immediately before the student strike of 2005 began, ASSÉ and several unaffiliated student associations formed a larger coalition to facilitate organizing. This was **CASSÉE**, the “enlarged coalition of ASSÉ,” whose name rhymed with the French adjective for “dead broke” as well as the verb “to break.” CASSÉE was dissolved after the 2005 strike ended.

A new coalition was formed for the 2012 strike, called **CLASSE**—the “large coalition of ASSÉ,” whose name may reference either classes at a school or class relations.

**CLAC**, the Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Struggles, is an organization with a long history in Montréal. Besides organizing the anti-capitalist May Day demonstrations for the last three years, it was involved in the Montréal side of organizing against both the FTAA summit in Québec City in 2001 and the G20 summit in Toronto in 2010.

**CRÉPUQ**, the Conference of Québécois University Rectors and Principals, is an organization intended to represent the interests of university administrations across Québec. Its main offices are housed in downtown Montréal's Loto-Québec Building.

**Québecor** is a media and communications corporation that owns—among other things—the right-wing Journal de Montréal and Journal de Québec newspapers and the Sun News Network, an English-language television channel that could be considered the Canadian equivalent of Fox News.

**Hydro-Québec** is Québec's state-run hydroelectric corporation.

The **SPVM** is Montréal's municipal police force, whereas the **SQ**—the Sûreté du Québec, literally “the safety of Québec”—is the provincial police force.

The word “casserole” usually refers to a stove pot in French, but in May of 2012, it became an adjective that was appended to the word *manifestation* or *manif* in order to indicate something new: a demonstration in which people march in the streets banging pots and pans. In Montréal English, this is referred to as a **casserole demo** or simply a **casserole**.

Blocking entry to class is arguably what distinguishes a student **strike** from a student **boycott**. Both the media and those anti-strike students who find themselves trying to talk their way through a hard picket often try to explain things to militants: “You see, you're confused about what you're doing. This is a boycott, and because it's a boycott, other students shouldn't be prevented from going to class and professors shouldn't be prevented from teaching.” The usual argument is that students are consumers, not workers; they are not withdrawing services, but refusing to use a product that they have already bought. This is deceptive. Universities are social factories; they produce the specially trained workers—not just skilled, but also *disciplined* and able to follow orders—that the capitalist economy of Québec needs to function. At the moment, they are actually producing *too many* trained workers, and so production needs to be ramped down. This threatens many people whose survival, or at least their quality of life, is currently tied to this system. One of the best ways to fight back is cease *all* production, to stop any part of the factory from functioning.

Some labour unions, while supporting the strike to a greater or lesser degree, insist that only labour unions can *legally* go on strike; therefore, what students in Québec have been doing is a boycott. Of course, there was a time when *anything* that could be called a strike was strictly illegal. The militancy of the labour movement was what encouraged states to recuperate hierarchical unions into the ruling order and grant the right to engage in limited strike actions under certain conditions.

*Continued on page 6...*

# Guelph Student Mobilization Committee – Who Are We?

by Peter Miller

The Guelph Student Mobilization Committee (GSMC) was created this summer at the University of Guelph by a group of students inspired by the glorious Québec Student Strike. This movement demonstrates that youth today are not apathetic, and are ready to lead the popular struggle for social change. All across the world student movements have exploded; from Québec, to California, to Chile, they are organizing and making it clear that youth are ready to take action for a better future.

All across the world people are now facing so-called austerity budgets, in the aftermath of the global recession brought about by greedy bankers and inept neoliberal governments. These latest round of attacks includes cuts to social services, privatization of institutions (including post-secondary education through increased user fees), deregulation of environmental policies, increased spending on the military, jails, and policing as well as other pro corporate, anti-people policies. We are seeing such austerity attacks right now here in Canada. In Québec, students began organizing against a seventy five percent

tuition hike, as well as the imposition of flat fees of two hundred dollars per citizen for access to health care, and the Plan Nord that will open up protected areas and Indigenous territories in northern Québec for mining and gas exploitation. Under the Harper Conservative government we have seen reduced corporate taxes, deregulation of environmental policy, the introduction

of a new program that entrenches the exploitation of migrant workers by allowing employers to pay fifteen percent less to migrant workers than Canadians, increased military spending including the purchase of F-35 Fighter jets at the cost of sixteen billion dollars, the denial of access to health care for

refugees in Canada, and much more. In Ontario, people have had to bear rising tuition fees which are more expensive than any other province in Canada, a prospective freeze on the wages of public workers, a freeze in welfare, and many other austerity measures, all while the Ontario government has moved to slash taxes on corporations down to a measly eleven percent.



ILLUSTRATION:  
ROXANNE DUPONT

## Student movements have exploded all across the world

The GSMC aims to convince students at Guelph that we need to take action like the students of Québec if we want to improve the future for people in Ontario. It is a political choice for governments

to introduce austerity measures; a choice that benefits the richest members of society at the expense of the rest of the ninety nine percent. The Ontario government's decision to increase tuition fees is not a necessity because the government cannot pay: provincial and federal governments could pay for post-secondary education without any need for tuition fees.

The GSMC wants as many students as possible to get involved in our group. We are committed to building the movement in Ontario through action! Québec has seen the average student become an advocate for a better, more equitable society. We and many other students across the province want this to happen in Ontario. Let's spread this energy in order to overturn the balance of power in Ontario from one that perpetuates a pro-profit society to one that is pro-student and pro-people!

Email [student.mobilization@gmail.com](mailto:student.mobilization@gmail.com) if you want to join the struggle! **P**



### Guelph Student Mobilization Committee: Basis of Unity

1. We stand in solidarity with Québec students in their ongoing struggle against their provincial government.
2. We campaign for a free, accessible, public post-secondary education system; as a corollary, we also demand student debt amnesty.
3. We oppose Bill 78, introduced by the Québec government to crack down on the student movement, and all other attacks on our democratic rights.
4. We also recognize that this struggle for accessible tuition is connected to a larger emerging movement of resistance against the general austerity measures that are being imposed on the populations in this country and across the world.



52.1 Québec "Student" Strike

PHOTO: GSMC



# WHILE THE IRON IS HOT PART II

## Background: Prehistory of the 2012 Strike

### ANCIENT HISTORY: 2005

The Liberal government had made the decision to turn most of the bursaries in the “loans and bursaries” student financial aid program into loans that would have to be repaid. All the major student federations, from the reformist FÉCQ and FÉUQ to the “combat syndicalist” ASSÉ, opposed the reforms.

The strike started February 21<sup>st</sup>, when the anthropology students’ association at the Université de Montréal—a member of CASSÉÉ—approved a strike mandate. Things really began three days later, on February 24<sup>th</sup>, when more than 30,000 members of CASSÉÉ entered the strike. FÉCQ and FÉUQ called for strikes on March 4<sup>th</sup> and March 9<sup>th</sup> respectively, and by March 15<sup>th</sup>, there were over 100,000 students on strike across the province.

The strike, which lasted a month and a half, was the longest and most disruptive up to that point in Québec’s history. There were numerous *manif-actions* over the course of the strike: blockades of bridges, blockades of the port and the casino, sabotage of gas stations, disruptions of underground shopping centers. There were also confrontational demonstrations involving attacks on police and private property. For the government, the strike’s negative effect on the economy became more significant than the savings that might have been derived from cutting bursaries.

The government eventually chose to negotiate with “the students”—meaning the leaders of FÉCQ and FÉUQ, not CASSÉÉ. Unlike the 2012 strike, in 2005 the reformist federations represented the majority of striking students, and the leaders of those organizations were happy to return to class as soon as the government withdrew its reforms. To be clear: they backed down precisely when the

government was in a position of profound weakness, missing the opportunity to mount the pressure further and secure greater concessions. Militants associated with CASSÉÉ denounced the leaders of FÉCQ and FÉUQ as traitors; during one infamous action, they released rats into FÉUQ’s offices. Yet isolated in the face of intensifying police repression, CASSÉÉ could not continue striking for long; it was soon forced to disband.

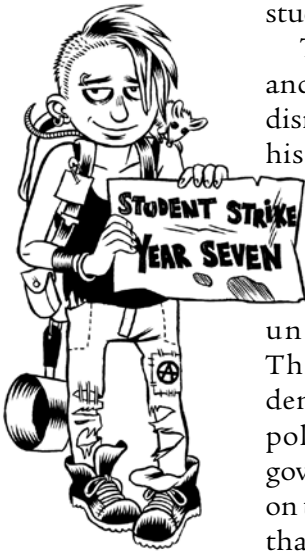
2005 was the first year that the student movement used the symbol of the red square, indicating that students were “squarely in the red”—an expression that works as well in French as in English. Without acknowledging its origins, the students appropriated this symbol from the direct action-oriented anti-homelessness movement that had been quite powerful in Montréal just a few years earlier. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005, some militants hung a giant red square from the giant cross on Mount Royal that overlooks the city; this became a lasting image of the strike.

### NOVEMBER 2007

Tuition had been unfrozen. University enrollment cost Québécois students \$100 more than the year previous.

In an effort to begin a longer-lasting *unlimited general strike* in 2008, general assemblies at a few isolated schools across Québec—mostly associated with ASSÉ—obtained strike mandates for November 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup>. Hard pickets were organized, including one at Dawson College, the first anglophone school ever to participate in a student strike. There was also an occupation at Cégep du Vieux Montréal, brutally repressed by the police in an event remembered as “the Tuesday of the batons.” Because of the repression, efforts to block entry to classes were generally ineffectual.

There was no strike in 2008. The





movement was disorganized. Tuition increased by another \$100 the following year for Québécois students; the hikes continued for the specified amount of time, ending with the 2011/12 school year.

### **DECEMBER 6, 2010**

The Liberal government in power since 2003 met in Québec City with representatives of CRÉPUQ and the three student federations. Busloads of students arrived from across Québec to demonstrate outside the summit, especially from Montréal. Inside, the government and CRÉPUQ confirmed to the student representatives that, beginning in the 2012/13 school year, tuition would increase by \$325 each year for five years; they insisted that the decision had already been made and there was no alternative. This prompted the student representatives to walk out, after which a motley group of anarchists, party communists, and other militants attempted to get in: they infiltrated the building, spray painted walls, and attempted to build barricades and break down the doors of the conference room before Québec City police chased them out.

Better than nothing, but no repeat of the siege of Millbank Tower in London, England, less than a month before.

### **MARCH 12, 2011**

The Alliance sociale—a coalition of seven labour unions plus FÉCQ and FÉUQ—called for a demonstration on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to demand an “equitable budget.” In a callout for an anti-capitalist contingent, anarchists denounced this organization, its rhetoric—particularly its appeals to the middle class—and its shortsighted strategy of trying to replace one gang of politicians with another. When the day actually came, twelve people wearing black were identified to the police as troublemakers by union peace marshals; they were arrested before the demo could begin, charged with criminal

conspiracy and possession of weapons, and given non-association conditions with one another. The conspiracy charges were quickly dropped.

A spontaneous solidarity demonstration was called for that night; mostly anarchists showed up, and there were clashes with police. One popular slogan that night was LE 15 MARS, LA VENGEANCE (“March 15<sup>th</sup>, REVENGE!”), referring to the annual anti-police demonstration a few days later. Unfortunately, the anti-police demo on March 15 was shut down after only forty-five minutes.

### **FURTHER EVENTS IN MARCH 2011**

On March 24<sup>th</sup>, the finance minister’s Montréal offices were briefly occupied, and a disruptive march spontaneously followed. A week later, on March 31<sup>st</sup>, during a “national” demonstration called by all three student associations, militants associated with ASSÉ occupied the offices of CRÉPUQ in the Loto-Québec building on rue Sherbrooke, with some anarchists participating. The occupiers quickly negotiated with the police to be let out of the building, but people remained congregated in front of it and refused to disperse until the police used flash-bang grenades.

These clashes were indecisive and at the time it was unclear what strategy was behind them. Yet they showed that some participants in the student movement were willing to interfere with business as usual.

### **SUDDENLY, OCCUPY MONTRÉAL**

Shortly after Occupy Wall Street failed to occupy Wall Street on September 17<sup>th</sup>, people in Montréal—like others around North America—organized their own spinoff. Rather than building momentum for a strike, many people shifted their energy into Occupy (or *Occupons*) Montréal, a movement that quickly took on many problematic characteristics. These included strict pacifism, fetishizing the general

**1** Citizenists range from affirming the privileges of citizenship to calling explicitly for non-citizens to be deported—or worse. Citizenism is structurally similar to white supremacism, and often overlaps with it; in the Québécois context, citizenists emphasize knowledge of French and acceptance of “Québécois values.”

Photos clockwise from top left: A barricade on the escalators leading from the second floor to the third floor during the Cégep du Vieux occupation; **March 15<sup>th</sup>** One Molotov cocktail was thrown—the first in the course of the strike.; Gathering projectiles.; **April 11<sup>th</sup>** Blocking a car from entering the parking garage at National Bank.; **March 15<sup>th</sup>** Posing: who wouldn't?; Upon attacking a street fighter engaged in property destruction, a vigilante is himself attacked.

assembly, and accommodating the participation of a nationalist militia that serves as a place for citizenists<sup>1</sup> and white supremacists to recruit new members. Whereas established anarchist scenes elsewhere in North America at least *tried* to engage with the local manifestations of the Occupy phenomenon, anarchist engagement with Occupy Montréal didn't last long at all.

While others were laboring to challenge the widespread notion that nonviolence offered a viable strategy for an anti-austerity movement, Occupy Montréal gave this fallacy a renewed credibility. As people sought to identify the specific ways that capitalist exploitation was intensifying in Montréal, Occupy Montréal embraced a simplified analysis needlessly imported from the United States. When militants were strategizing about occupying something, Occupy Montréal had the unfortunate effect of making many people shy away from that word lest they be associated with the 99% rhetoric.

No matter the richness of Montréal's own traditions of resistance—they couldn't compete with a mass-produced cookie-cutter protest culture imported from south of the border.

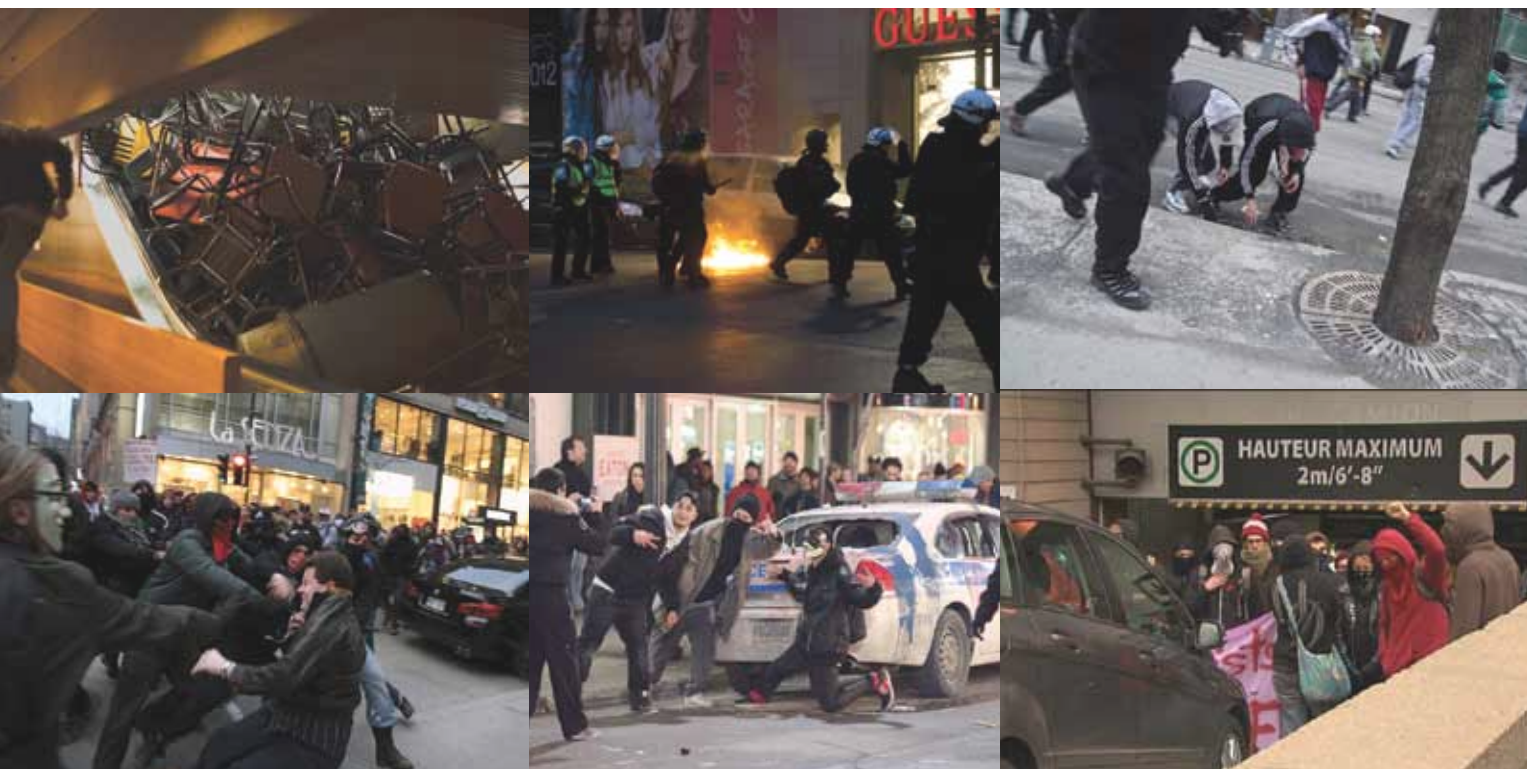


November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011: riot police enter McGill campus for the first time in 42 years.

## NOVEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2011

During summer 2011, FÉCQ, FÉUQ, and ASSÉ agreed to present an ultimatum to the government on November 10: concede to our demands or we strike. A staggering amount of movement resources was poured into promoting this ultimately pacifying demo. The involvement of FÉCQ and FÉUQ was controversial among more radical students, on account of their betrayal of the 2005 strike.

The day started with pickets at several schools. Some of these, especially on anglophone campuses like Concordia and Dawson College, were “soft” pickets that didn't attempt to block entry, while others were “hard”—although not always





effective, as at UQÀM, where many workers and students were able to slip past the pickets into the school.



Check out the Video of the riot police entering McGill campus on Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> online: [guelphpeak.org](http://guelphpeak.org)

The demonstration started in the afternoon, with several contingents from the universities and cégeps in the downtown area converging on avenue McGill College. The demo marched around downtown for a long time, and when it finally returned to McGill College, there was a confrontation at Jean Charest's Montréal offices in which one militant was arrested; this was partially the fault of demo organizers associated with FÉUQ, who sabotaged efforts to attack the building. Several others were arrested nearby at an occupation of McGill University's administration building. Once again, the organizers of the demo, this time

including ASSÉ militants, sabotaged the efforts of those who wanted to announce to the crowd of what was happening close by. The organizers insisted that it was time for students to get back to their buses, willfully ignoring the fact that a large portion of the crowd was from Montréal.

Fewer people would have been in the streets if November 10<sup>th</sup> had been explained as a day of confrontation, like the recent actions in defense of education in Italy, Greece, Chile, and even England. But how useful were the additional participants, if the result was a passive demonstration that the government could ignore? Even if we consider it desirable to present ultimatums to the government, wouldn't it have been more persuasive to deliver that threat by *doing something* and threatening to *keep on doing it*?

#### FEBRUARY 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012

The November 10<sup>th</sup> ultimatum had been ignored—so the strike began. Two departments at Université Laval and one department at UQÀM voted to go on strike and join CLASSE. From this point on, the number of students on strike increased every day for about a month and a half.

*Continued on Page 13...*

**Photos Clockwise from Left: April 1<sup>st</sup>** Gallons of red paint on the Montréal offices of the Ministry of Education, Leisure, and Sports in the early morning. ; **April 22<sup>nd</sup>** The offices of SNC Lavalin early in the morning. ; **April 15<sup>th</sup>** The aftermath of an attack on a government minister's Montréal office in the night. ; **April 20<sup>th</sup>** A fire hydrant spewing its contents. ; **May Day 2012** Militants. ; Cops running for their lives.





# A Short History of the Québec Student Movement

by Padraic O'Brien

Québec's post-secondary education system and strong student mobilization have not always been the way they are today. The student movement emerged in the 1960s in the midst of a wider reawakening of society during the period called the Quiet Revolution, which saw important transformations in the state fuelled by labour, nationalist and women's struggles. During this period, the traditional, conservative state apparatus tied to the Catholic clergy and US multinational interests was reformed into arguably the most progressive social democracy in North America. At the forefront of this transformation was the struggle for equal socio-economic status for the Francophone majority which had long found itself under a subordinate status in the province. The various political movements associated with the push for reform saw the state as the ideal instrument to modernize Québec society and empower Francophones, and education as one of the main vectors for this transformation. Access to education was highly unequal in the early 1960s, and only three of the six universities in

the province were French-speaking, even though Francophones made up around eighty-five percent of the population.

The student movement had already started putting pressure on the government in the later Duplessis years, demanding

more investment in education, but it was still mostly unorganized. The first major changes in education were brought by the state in the midst of the Parent Commission launched in 1961 to modernize education in the province. Its biggest impact came with the establishment of the public college network of the Collèges d'Éducation Générale et Professionnelle (cégeps) all across the province, in replacement of the private classical colleges which were seen as elitist and out of phase with contemporary issues. Cégeps offered free, collegial education, with both academic and technical programs, to a large swath of the population that had previously been left out of higher education. The foundation of cégeps in itself revolutionized Québec education, but it would also directly trigger another important development: the birth of an organized, combative student movement.

The establishment of cégeps did not go anywhere near solving the problems associated with higher education in Québec. Accessing the University was still difficult, especially for Francophones, and post-graduation prospects for the thousands of new cégep students were uncertain. There were also a number of issues with the transition from classical colleges to cégeps, such as an authoritarian teaching style and the administration's refusal to open cégeps up to co-management with student associations. The new cohort of students, a large number of them originating from the working class, thus quickly became radicalized. In 1968 the Mai '68 movement was launched in France by insurgent students and spread across the world. In the midst of this, the first provincial student association, the

**The foundation of cégeps in itself revolutionized Québec education, but it would also directly trigger another important development: the birth of an organized, combative student movement.**

General Union of Quebec Students (UGEQ) emerged from Université de Montréal and Université Laval student associations and began coordinating with cégep student associations. The summer and fall of 1968 saw increasing agitation on Québec campuses as for the first time student associations were eager to flex their muscles against a government that they thought was moving too slowly in expanding university access to Francophones and implementing the measures of the Parent Commission, which had, amongst other things, argued for free education.

Following a chaotic start of the school year on many colleges, the situation exploded when students at the Cégep Lionel-Groulx, in Ste-Thérèse, north of Montreal, occupied their establishment and launched a general strike. The action received the immediate approval of the UGEQ which

called for assemblies to be held on every other campus to discuss launching similar actions. Strikes were launched in cégeps across the province, from



Rimouski, QC to Hull, QC as well as at the Université de Montréal, with the metropole [capital] becoming the site of the first mass student protests in Québec history. The strike lasted three weeks on a number of campuses, and while the government did not give in immediately, it had tremendous impacts for the years to come. It would lead the government to finally set up the public Université du Québec network, establishing public francophone universities in Montréal and in a number of regional cities, as well as to a tuition freeze that would last until 1990.

The student movement did not consolidate with this milestone event, however, as the UGEQ was dissolved shortly thereafter following internal disagreements and a fear of its own bureaucratization. The

student movement eventually re-emerged in 1974 to confront the Liberal Bourassa government. Seeing little progress in the accessibility of education and amidst a context of economic crisis, labour struggles and rising nationalist sentiment, students organized to fight back against the implementation of aptitude tests in universities and to demand a better bursary and loan system. Free education and a student “salary” also featured prominently among the demands of the students, and in December thirty-seven cégeps joined a strike, launched this time in Rimouski, QC. The government, placed in a difficult situation, would give in reluctantly to most of the smaller demands, excluding free education from considerations. This strike also led to the consolidation of the Association Nationale des Etudiants et Etudiantes du Québec (ANEEQ) as

a combative, province-wide student association.

Following the victory of the Parti Québécois (PQ) under René Lévesque in 1976,

a large portion of the student movement, dominated by independent tendencies, lost its combativeness and some student leaders of the previous generation even gained influential positions in government. But disappointment grew quickly as the government moved very slowly in the eyes of students, and a third general strike in 1978 rallied over 100 000 students with the support of teachers’ unions, in 1978, prompting the government to improve the loan and bursaries program. This mobilization also led the establishment of two competing student federations, Rassemblement des association étudiantes universitaires (RAEU) and Fédération des associations étudiantes collégiales du Québec (FAECQ), which broke with the tradition of combative unionism, and can

be considered as the predecessors of the contemporary La Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) and Fédération étudiante Collégiale du Québec (FECQ).

In 1986, as the Liberal government returned to power, students grew increasingly worried about signs that the tuition freeze would be lifted, just as possible detrimental modifications to the loan and bursaries program were being discussed. Students from thirty cégeps and UQAM went on strike for two weeks, prompting the government to back down from lifting the freeze. In 1988, riding on this latest victory, the ANEEQ felt strong enough to launch a more offensive strike, demanding an improvement to loans and bursaries. The student associations, still recovering from the latest conflict, failed to mobilize in large numbers and the movement quickly died down. When the government announced only slight improvements a few months later, it also announced it would lift the tuition freeze in 1990.

The ANEEQ called for another strike, but once again exhausted student associations proved unable to mobilize students en masse, with only fifteen cégeps and UQAM joining the movement. The strike was a failure, but the tuition freeze was reinstated in 1994 following a PQ victory (but not before fees had been increased significantly).

In 1996, the ANEEQ was dead, and the PQ reneged on its electoral promise of a tuition freeze, proposing to hike fees by thirty percent. This time, students reacted strongly, with forty cégeps and two universities going on strike, and a new combative student association, the MDE, providing some leadership. The then-Minister of Education and current PG leader Pauline Marois backed down on her proposal and the freeze was maintained.

By 2001, the Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ)

was formed from different cégeps and universities. This association, which adopted direct democracy and general assemblies in its decision-making, first took leadership in the campaign against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Summit in Québec City in 2001 before guiding the student movement in the next general strike in 2005. That year, the Liberal government, under the first mandate of Premier Charest, attempted to convert 103 million dollars of bursaries into loans, prompting a strike of over 185 000 students from the membership of the ASSÉ, FEUQ and FECQ for up to eight weeks. Although the ASSÉ, the most combative and radical union, was left out of negotiations, the strike was considered a victory and the government finally agreed to maintain the bursaries in their entirety. While a majority of striking students voted against the deal, the rapid disengagement of the FECQ and FEUQ led to wide demobilization and the end of the strike. The members of the ASSÉ, however, sensed their potential power and vowed to reignite the fight for free education whenever the conditions are ripe. *P*



# Maple Spring Part 1:

## Before Plan Nord, Beginning of Maple Spring

# WHILE THE IRON IS HOT PART III

### FEBRUARY 17: THE OCCUPATION OF CÉGEP DU VIEUX MONTRÉAL

**O**n February 17, 2012, the students of Cégep du Vieux Montréal voted to go on strike and join CLASSE. The school administration had already stated that, in the event of a successful strike vote, they would close the building and prevent the school from being occupied as had happened in 2005 and, briefly, in 2007. The strike vote took place online, but as soon as the results were announced, students voted in a general assembly—held in the cégep’s cafeteria—to occupy the building. It is possible that, in the course of this discussion, it was agreed that barricades should be built; it is also possible that the possibility of doing so was merely *discussed*. In any case, some people began building them while others called for people to show up from other schools, and still others continued talking in the general assembly.

The brief occupation of Cégep du Vieux exemplified the negative influence of Occupy on the opening phase of the student strike. The general assembly has a long-established place in most francophone schools; in this case, a sizeable proportion of the participants treated it as an end unto itself, rather than as a tool unto an end. As more militants and police arrived at the school, the assembly continued, discussing questions less and less relevant to the situation at hand. Furthermore, the participants showed themselves to be completely out of touch with reality—exemplified by their continuing to discuss *whether* to endorse barricading the building even as others were already doing so. (*photo pg. 8*)

Many students of the cégep, opposing the strike or simply dismissive of outside help, went around bothering people—particularly anglophones, especially those less capable in the French language—about what they were doing in “*notre école*.” Those building barricades were threatened and provoked, although no actual fights broke out. Elsewhere, others vigorously argued with “outsiders” and “troublemakers” who had equipped themselves with fire extinguishers in preparation for the eventual police siege, ultimately frustrating those people enough that they decided to leave. Others used the fire extinguishers anyway, but by that time, many people had left the premises with a sense of how badly things were going to end. There had been a call for general participation, but this was immaterial for an angry minority that probably didn’t want *anyone* getting unruly but found it easiest to attack those who couldn’t speak French or who weren’t studying at that particular institution.

There was no plan for the occupation, and while it’s not certain that it could have been held successfully if there *had* been a plan, the lack of preparation didn’t help. Many people had very little sense of the layout of the building, which is built onto the side of a large hill, giving the police the option to enter from one of the higher floors and progress downwards to the lobby where the general assembly and the bulk of occupiers had eventually moved. Certain militants started building tall barricades on the front steps and additional ones on higher floors. Other people drank and partied.

Throughout the occupation, no one took action to evict the school’s security guards, who were allowed to roam freely,

impotent to stop what was going on but collecting evidence that was used in criminal proceedings later. For the most part, cameras were not sabotaged, nor even covered up. One particular person filmed everything, evidently with good intentions, but the police later confiscated his camera and used his footage as additional evidence. These failures to act, failures to think, and failures to tell people *Stop fucking filming, tabernak de câlisse!* cost dearly, as the subsequent police investigation turned up lots of evidence against those who had committed “acts of mischief” during the night.

### MARCH 7–15: THINGS HEAT UP

Two and a half weeks since the beginning of the strike, March 7<sup>th</sup> marked a turning point. By this time, there had already been many demonstrations and a few blockades of critical infrastructure, such as the blockade of the Jacques-Cartier bridge on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Thus far in 2012, the SPVM had refrained from using flashbang grenades or tear gas to repress students, deeming batons and pepper spray sufficient. By March 7<sup>th</sup>, it was high time for them to escalate tactics; it was a little surprising that they hadn’t already.

**Photo:** Left, Despite a dangerously permissive attitude to surveillance during the Cégep du Vieux occupation, at least one camera got what it deserved. Right, demo outside of Loto-Quebec.



The occupation lasted nine short hours altogether. A small group of students who had locked themselves in a classroom were the last militants in the building.

The brief occupation of Cégep du Vieux was the only attempt at a lasting occupation of a university or cégep building during the entire strike, and its failure had major ramifications.



The day reprised the events of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011. As that day, the crowd converged on rue Sherbrooke in front of the Loto-Québec building, although this time, no one had infiltrated the CRÉPUQ offices. The intention, apparently, was simply to walk in and occupy the building. The crowd also dragged metal fencing to the area from elsewhere and used it to create barricades on rue Sherbrooke, a major downtown thoroughfare. Riot police attacked these barricades and went on to attack the crowd with pepper spray and batons, arresting a few people in the process. The crowd didn’t disperse, and at that point flashbang grenades were used to get them running. Shrapnel from one of these hit one participant, Francis Grenier, in the face. Glass from the sunglasses he was wearing was forced into his right eye, permanently disabling him.

*(Check out video of March 7<sup>th</sup> demo online)*

If this had just been a moment when a crowd realized that cops weren’t their friends—yet another incident in which police maimed someone without facing

**In contrast to 2005, when many buildings were occupied, the police and the university administrators immediately sent the message that lasting occupations would not be tolerated. This is what forced people to take the streets day after day, making the 2012 strike more visible and disruptive than the previous one.**

any consequences—it wouldn't have been particularly significant for anyone except for the people affected. But things played out differently.

An Occupy-style assembly was called for Berri Square that night, with the organizers appealing for calm and promising people a chance to “express their indignation.” Instead, when people gathered, angry militants who wanted nothing to do with the organizers’ pacifying rhetoric told them to shut the fuck up. This small group of instigators, the most vocal element in the crowd, called for the crowd to take the streets; most followed them. In the course of the subsequent demonstration, projectiles were thrown at police officers, police cruisers parked at a substation on boulevard René-Lévesque were vandalized, and—in a truly epic moment—people used crowd control barriers as battering rams against the front doors of the SPVM headquarters while the police nearby were still scrambling to put on their riot gear. Sadly, it was the peace police who wrested the barriers from the hands of the *indignéEs*, who were evidently not expressing their indignation in an appropriately passive manner in the eyes of the assembly organizers.

One of the prominent chants that night was *LE 15 MARS, LA VENGEANCE*. This had first been chanted a year previous, on the night of March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The implication was that the police would pay for their abuses at the upcoming annual March 15<sup>th</sup> anti-police demo. In 2011, this hadn't occurred; 2012, on the other hand, saw the largest demonstration in the history of the event.

In the week between March 7<sup>th</sup> and March 15, three developments paved the way for this. Anarchists fliered and postered aggressively for the March 15<sup>th</sup> demo. In addition, there was a crucial development in the political development of CLASSE, followed immediately by a very interesting day and night in the streets.

In stark contrast to FÉCQ and FÉUQ, every decision CLASSE makes as an organization is determined in a directly democratic fashion. Since February, delegates from CLASSE's constituent student associations plus independent activists have physically met for two days of decision-making each and every weekend; this is called a congress. Whatever the problems of direct democracy, the decisions that emerge from these congresses illustrate clearly enough the attitudes and political consciousness of those in attendance. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, the second day of a congress held in Montréal, CLASSE's members voted to endorse the March 15<sup>th</sup> anti-police demo and encourage militants to attend in large numbers. This was unprecedented in the history of the student movement—CASSÉE's congress had firmly rejected the idea during the 2005 strike—and it had a tremendous impact on the streets.



Meanwhile, the social struggles committee of CLASSE organized a demo for March 13<sup>th</sup> connecting the struggle against austerity and neoliberalism—but not capitalism—in Québec to similar struggles in Greece, Spain, Chile, and Colombia. Outside the skyscraper that apparently houses the Colombian consulate in Montréal, a small group of black bloc militants fought police and spray painted a police car. A fight ensued between pacifists and militants who had

**Photo:** This is what democracy looks like.



come prepared for a confrontation. Images of this were broadcast throughout the media and used to highlight “divisions” in the student movement, or as proof that anarchists had “infiltrated” it. At this time, most sections of the mainstream media in Québec were trying to portray some students as legitimate and others as violent. This strategy changed later, when the entire movement was demonized and only “the 60% of students who oppose the strike and are quietly attending classes” were lauded.

That evening had been announced as Unlimited Creation Night at the Pavillon Hubert-Aquin on UQAM’s main campus. Militants at that school had called for participants in the movement, as well as the general population, to “come democratize art in the larger sense”—whatever that means. Although the propaganda was intentionally vague and surreal, it was clear that a university building was going to be occupied and used for *more creative* purposes than normal.

Not surprisingly, the school administration did not want this event to occur. In the days leading up to it, a small notice on the front page of the UQAM website declared: “There is no event by the name of Unlimited Creation Night organized by students at UQAM on March 13<sup>th</sup>, no matter where the information comes from.” On the day itself, Pavillon Hubert-Aquin—with its large courtyard and ample space—was closed and guarded by school security, and the few organizers and other militants who showed up at the beginning of the evening were neither willing nor prepared to break in. However, the administration had left another building open.

Pavillon J.-A.-DeSève, just next to Hubert-Aquin, was a less desirable space, but a giant party erupted in it and lasted long into the night. Furniture plundered from the building was placed in the street, free food was served from the lobby, and people started passing around alcohol and

other intoxicants. The “democratizers of art in the larger sense” ran down corridors with paint rollers, graffiti blossomed in the area around the building, and participants sang anti-cop songs; it ended with an impromptu late-night march through city streets that saw attacks on police cars and widespread vandalism, before the participants escaped into the métro, smashing surveillance cameras.

All of this had a joyous tone very different from the so-called “festivity” of the average passive march. In addition to fleur-de-lysé flags and vapid rhetoric about democracy, such marches are usually depressing for anarchists because young, able-bodied people are cheering and having all the appearances of a good time when they have *absolutely nothing to celebrate*: they are hurtling towards impoverishment without doing anything to resist. On Unlimited Creation Night, people created something new and enjoyable, something worth defending and replicating—something that the state would do everything it could to snuff out as soon as it had the chance. The unlikeliness of the event, and its unexpected success, were worth celebrating in and of themselves.

This last aspect marks March 13<sup>th</sup> as very different from the events at Cégep du Vieux a few weeks previous. In the earlier occupation, the prevailing attitude—or at least the most obnoxiously visible one—had been that the occupation’s only purpose was to put pressure on the administration and the government. Here, the occupation offered a glimpse of a different way of relating to each other and the urban environment.

This brings us to March 15<sup>th</sup>. Since 1997, March 15<sup>th</sup> has been designated International Day Against Police Brutality, although Montréal is the only city where it has been consistently observed. The demonstration typically attracts a lot of youth—chiefly homeless kids from downtown and Hochelaga or black and Arab youth from across the city—as well

as the usual anarchists, Maoists, and other militants, many of whom are prepared to fight the police. The demonstrations of 2010 and 2011 had been muzzled by an overwhelming police presence, pre-emptive arrests of organizers in the Collective Opposed to Police Brutality, and those organizers' poor choices of routes and starting locations.

This trend was completely reversed in 2012. With CLASSE endorsing the march, the numbers converging at Berri Square far exceeded anything from the past few years. Although, after they were attacked, the police were still able to split the crowd, this did not disperse the demonstration. Instead, for the first time in the strike, *several* rowdy crowds roamed different parts of downtown and the police were completely unable to control the situation. Condominiums, police vehicles, and corporate stores were attacked, graffiti bloomed everywhere, and some people even managed to loot a Future Shop.



**Photo:** Shocked pacifist in background: “MADAME AND/OR MONSIEUR, what are you doing to my peaceful student movement!?” *More Photos on pg 8. Video online*

It was not surprising that March 15<sup>th</sup> was confrontational; it's *always* confrontational, if not always *successfully* confrontational. There was no reason to think that this would change the character of the strike—and for at least a few weeks, it didn't. However, a much larger group of people attended than in previous years, and as in the resistance

to the G20 summit in Toronto in 2010, they learned firsthand that those who fought back had a much better chance of escaping. The mass arrest—accounting for about 100 of the 226 arrested—that took place late in the evening near the Berri-UQÀM métro station targeted almost entirely people insisting on their right to demonstrate peacefully, long after the SPVM had declared the demonstration an unlawful assembly.

Having more people in the streets helped those who came to fight the police; even if most people weren't doing anything, this caused significant logistical problems for officers who were doing all they could to get people to disperse or at least return to the sidewalks. The unsettlingly warm weather was also a boon. Unfortunately, as in previous years, no one made an effort to forge lasting connections with the youth who always come out in large numbers on March 15<sup>th</sup> but rarely attend other demonstrations. There's little evidence that the most marginalized people in the city have seen the strike as relevant to them.

### **MARCH 26 TO APRIL 19: WEEK(S) OF ECONOMIC DISRUPTION**

In early March, CLASSE had agreed with FÉCQ and FÉUQ that another “national” demonstration in the same style as November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 would occur on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, issuing a further ultimatum to the government: *this time*, if you don't concede to our demands, we are going to begin a concerted campaign of economic disruption. Once again, instead of threatening economic disruption by demonstrating what the movement could do to that end, the CLASSE strategy was geared towards winning over public opinion via the mass media. This is certainly important, but should not be prioritized over actually building collective power.

Anarchists attempted to organize a blockade of Montréal's port in order to give the day a confrontational aspect.

**Photo:** March 22nd, 2012.



Without the institutional support provided to the passive demonstration downtown, however, this wasn't as successful as hoped.

As anarchists anticipated, the government ignored one of the largest demonstrations that had ever taken place in the history of the Canadian state up to that point, with more than 200,000 people in the streets of Montréal. As hesitant as CLASSE's congress had been to support economic disruption, this drove almost all the members of the coalition to embrace the notion that *the time is now*. CLASSE threw itself into the project of halting the functioning of the capitalist economy in Montréal, Québec's economic engine. It went from simply promoting disruptive manif-actions on its website, most of which were organized by particular student associations or by informal

groups, to organizing these actions itself. On Monday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, the first *semaine de la perturbation économique* started. Many more followed.

The CLASSE-organized manif-actions brought huge numbers of people to the streets, but at other manif-actions—smaller ones organized autonomously of CLASSE with fewer movement resources dedicated to them—the numbers were also significantly boosted. Trickle-down economics is bunk, but the trickle-down effect seems to work in popular revolts.

Before getting into how things played out, let's acknowledge all the manif-actions that had already been happening. ASSÉ militants had organized several manif-actions in the 2010–11 school year; its political culture—which was largely diluted by incorporating less militant student associations into CLASSE—was heavily oriented towards direct action. In 2012, student associations that had been members of ASSÉ before 2012 independently organized several demonstrations and actions in February: a march on Autoroute 40, an attempt to shut down the Centre du commerce mondiale, and a blockade of the Jacques-Cartier bridge. These were not all small affairs, though they were smaller than some of the huge actions that followed in April 2012.

The defining characteristic of the manif-actions of the 2012 strike was that they began very early in the morning, usually between 5:30am and 9am, but most often at 7am or 7:30am. Their usual purpose was to disrupt the workday, either by delaying commuters trying to get to work or by preventing them from entering their workplaces when they arrived. There were many variations on these general themes. Once CLASSE called for economic disruption, there were suddenly *a lot more* early morning actions: many more people were getting up to participate in them, and space opened up for people to plan their own efforts.

**Photo:** Another image from March 22<sup>nd</sup>: "The strike starts today." An inaccurate statement, but CLASSE's concerted campaign of economic disruption started soon after.





Between March 26<sup>th</sup> and April 19<sup>th</sup>, there were literally dozens of actions. The head offices of the SAQ, the state liquor distribution corporation, were blocked on March 27<sup>th</sup>, and its Montréal distribution center was blocked on April 5<sup>th</sup>. The port of Montréal was blocked for the second time in a week, and much more successfully than before, on March 28<sup>th</sup>; thanks to greater numbers, reaching at least a thousand by the time militants reached their destination, the police did not move in for over two hours. There were further blockades on April 5 and April 10<sup>th</sup>.

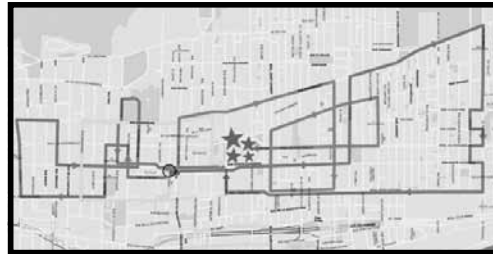
On March 29<sup>th</sup>, four different marches—each color-coded to represent a different line in Montréal’s metro—started at Square Phillips and roamed around different parts of downtown as part of a demonstration called the Grande Mascarade. Endorsed by CLASSE and organized with the coalition’s logistical support, all participants were encouraged to wear masks. The reason was explicitly stated: to normalize the practice of remaining anonymous in the face of the repressive police apparatus. One participant was quoted as saying that the organizers of the demo were “not calling for violence, but if people do it, that’s why we’re in the streets, it’s for that that we are on strike. It’s to create the opportune moment.”



**Photo:** The orange and yellow banners of March 29. Each banner was themed differently.

Some militants *did* take advantage of the moment created by the Grande Mascarade to engage in acts of vandalism,

but not many. Three people were arrested and charged with mischief, accused of being responsible for everything that had happened during the day; one of these people were later singled out for persecution by the police and the judiciary. Undercovers were instrumental in these arrests.



**Image:** A map of the itineraries followed by the four marches on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

National Bank, the only Canadian bank headquartered in Montréal, was targeted repeatedly during this period. On April 4<sup>th</sup>, their shareholders’ meeting at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel was disrupted, resulting in the first mass arrests on the Island of Montréal since the evening of March 15<sup>th</sup>: over 70 people altogether. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, when a different demonstration with a different target set out from Square Victoria every hour for twelve hours, blockading National Bank’s headquarters was the first action of the day. (*photo Pg. 8*) It lasted a little over an hour. At the northeast corner of the building, businesspeople physically attacked militants and were beaten in return, until the police finally moved in with pepper spray. April 11’s morning blockade was probably the most successful of any action in the “skyscraper blockade” genre.

Simultaneously, another manifestation—called by the student associations of several cégeps in northern Montréal and the suburb of Laval—interfered with morning commuter traffic by blocking the Viau Bridge, one of the links between the Island of Montréal and the Island of Jesus, for over an hour. Later on that day, demos departed from Square Victoria every hour, some of them causing further

disruption. Militants ran through La Baie, a large department store, causing chaos, around noon, and in the afternoon, there were physical confrontations with security as demonstrators attempted to blockade the headquarters of Québecor and—later again—the Montréal offices of CIBC, another bank.

With enthusiastic outside support, militants based at Concordia University organized an ambitious action for the morning of April 13<sup>th</sup>: the blockade of Concordia's Hall Building during the second day of exams. In a qualitative break from anglophone Concordia's response to every other student strike in the history of Québec, some departments there had gone on strike and there had been a number of small actions at the school—though compared to what had happened at francophone schools, the strike was still a failure there. The April



**Photo:** A human blockade at the CIBC tower. The banner reads: “The state ignores our cries. FÉCQ and FÉUQ appropriate them. Students against the sexist tuition hike!”

13<sup>th</sup> blockade failed when students who were eager to take their exams poured coffee on the tiled floor beneath the

militants blocking the tunnel between the métro station and the Hall Building—and, on the count of three, charged and breached the human wall. The police did nothing until militants decided to take the streets, at which point they broke out the pepper spray.

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, a morning manifestation billed as *ON SHUTDOWN LE CENTRE-VILLE* (“we are shutting down downtown”) started at Square Phillips, immediately breaking into two contingents. One proceeded to the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce's Montréal offices and blockaded them to prevent employees from entering; the other remained mobile, wandering around downtown to cause chaos and distract the police. Eventually, the mobile contingent joined the blockaders; they were finally forced to disperse from the building by the police. People kicked the cars belonging to civilians who tried to drive through crowds, a practice that became common even in very passive demos, since it is widely understood that motorists can hurt people.

In addition to mass actions like these, there were attacks on the economy that only required a small number of people, as well as attacks that could be considered less economic than political in their targeting. The latter continued after the movement shifted its attention from early-morning manif-actions towards a practice of marching in the streets every night. We can place the sacking of the education minister's offices in this latter category: buses of militants unloaded at Line Beauchamp's offices in the north of Montréal and proceeded to storm the building and destroy everything, leaving the employees frightened. The Battle of Victo on May 4<sup>th</sup>, discussed below, in which the provincial Liberal Party's annual convention was targeted, is another example of political targeting.

Perhaps the most significant economic attacks were the ones that targeted the métro system during the morning rush hour. On

**In addition to mass actions like these, there were attacks on the economy that only required a small number of people, as well as attacks that could be considered less economic than political in their targeting**

April 16<sup>th</sup>, bags of bricks were left on the rails at locations around the city, causing chaos. This happened again on April 25<sup>th</sup> when two smoke bombs went off on different lines, and then another smoke bomb went off in Complexe Desjardins, a shopping center home to many business offices. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, there was much greater chaos as a result of four smoke bombs going off in some of the city's major métro stations. Those who are now facing criminal charges for that action will be the first in history to be charged with a certain provision in Canada's post-9/11 anti-terrorism legislation that forbids anyone from committing a *terrorist hoax*, defined as the creation of a situation in which it is reasonable for people to believe that terrorism is occurring or is about to occur.

Other attacks appeared less strategic, taken individually—graffiti, window breaking, nocturnal attacks on parked police vehicles—but together created an atmosphere of tension. Such attacks always occur in Montréal, but they increased in volume after the beginning of the strike. On the night of April 15<sup>th</sup>, notably, there was a coordinated attack on four different government ministers' offices around Montréal, in which



windows were broken and unignited Molotov cocktails were supposedly left inside the buildings “as a threat,” although the logic behind such a threat is opaque. Other targets included SNC-Lavalin, the engineering firm that built the security fence in Toronto during the G20 summit, and the offices of *Le Journal de Montréal*.

These and many other actions could not have become as militant as they did outside of the context of manif-actions happening all the time, far more often than this best-of-the-strike list can portray.

**Photo:** The offices of the *Journal de Montréal* were attacked the very next night.

**Photo:** Plan Nord Demo, one of the wildest demos during the strike. Find a play by play on page 26.

*Continued on Page 26...*







# The Battle of Red Thursday

by Padraic O'Brien

*This article is a witness account of events by a Guelph student originating from Hull, Québec.*

For outside observers of the Québec Student Strike, Montreal appeared as the only center of attention, save for the one-night riot in Victoriaville when the Liberal Party hosted its convention there. But there was in fact quite a lot going on in at least a dozen cities across the province, in fact almost everywhere that you could find a university or a sizeable cégep. The Outaouais region became one of the epicenters of the protest movement after both the Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) and Cégep de l'Outaouais voted to go on strike in March. The traditionally quiet urban region made by Hull, Aylmer and Gatineau, lying just across the river from Ottawa, lit up like never before in history<sup>1</sup> to give way to a veritable showdown between students and cops. Here is an account of the day the Battle of UQO reached its height, on what became popularly known as Jeudi Rouge, "Red Thursday".

The UQO is one of the more modest campuses of the Université du Québec public university network spread out

across the province. It offers a number of degrees at relatively accessible rates, mostly to students from the local population who can't afford the high tuition fees found in the larger universities across the river in Ottawa. Counting on a very limited social science department, the campus had known only low-key mobilization during previous student strike episodes. However, something different would occur this year.

In January and February, the red square symbol of the pro-strike students became highly visible, and in mid-February, a Special General Assembly (SGA) was called following mobilization from a group of militant students. During the vote, a majority of students voted against going on strike. Antonin Bouret, a student in industrial relations involved in strike mobilization from the beginning, recalls that "big problems were observed however in the course of the SGA, which lead to complaints for procedural vice. The auditing committee of the AGE-UQO (UQO students' association) made an

<sup>1</sup> Not literally, as Hull has been destroyed by fire a number of times in its history.

investigation and ordered the reconvening of the SGA due to issues with registration and votes”.

This new SGA was convened in mid-March, after an already large number of student associations across the province had already joined the strike. Over 1 500 students participated, with fifty three percent of them voting to go on strike. “In the meantime, departmental associations had already taken the lead and convened their own SGAs, with four of them obtaining a mandate to go on strike by that time”, remarks Antonin Bouret. By that time, the over 4,600 students at Cégep de l’Outaouais were already on strike. With an increasingly tense atmosphere inside the campus, the stage was set for unprecedented confrontations.

Following the successful strike vote, a strike committee was immediately put in place to enforce it. With the administration initially refusing to respect the democratic decision taken by students, picket lines were set up on both campuses of the university, leading to confrontations with the handful of students who wanted to go their classes no matter what. The administration backed down, fearful of escalating tensions and followed the flow of other campuses in the province.

The UQO however became the first university to be targeted as a whole by an injunction request, obtained by a small group of students who wanted to force it to hold classes. The request was granted on April 11<sup>th</sup> by a judge, who was a member of the Liberal Party. In reaction, on the day the first classes were to restart, on April 14<sup>th</sup>, students spontaneously occupied the UQO early in the morning. “Students held the siege by raising barricades in various key positions of the Alexandre-Taché pavilion”, recalls Antonin Bouret, who witnessed the events, while professors were holding a press conference in their support just outside the premises. The students, upon leaving the siege, following the cancellation of classes for the day,

“received a hero’s welcome”. However The Battle of UQO was only beginning.

The following day, the administration made the first move by calling in the municipal police to control entry into the buildings. Students with red squares were excluded from going in, and confrontation reached new heights when a prof, who had previously shown his sympathy to the striking students, was violently arrested by five cops when trying to enter his office, and then handcuffed and taken across the campus while he was suffering from an epileptic seizure. Outraged, the students massed on the campus grounds, and launched a spontaneous demonstration in the streets, attracting the intervention of over a hundred cops, including, for the first time the, riot squad.

On the Wednesday, the students once again took to the streets, attempting to disrupt classes. On their way to the smaller Lucien-Brault pavilion, over 150 of them were kettled on a road by the riot squad, which proceeded to mass arrest them, leading to more outrage. “Meanwhile, a small group of students were able to find its way inside the pavilion”, notes an observer,

“where they were able to create enough disruption to once again get classes cancelled.” So far, the students had successfully thwarted the injunction, but this victory came at a large price. This succession of events also paved the way to the ultimate struggle on Red Thursday.

Early in the morning on Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, students began gathering in large numbers in the parking lot of the Robert-Guertin arena in downtown Hull. Excitement filled the air, as large numbers were expected, including reinforcements from outside. By 9am, four buses had arrived from Montreal and Valleyfield,

**The crowd of over 500 youths took Hull by storm, in what became the largest protest in the history of the Outaouais region.**

feeding over a hundred more troops to a growing contingent that set out into the streets with a new awareness of the extent of its power. The crowd of over 500 youth took Hull by storm, in what became the largest protest in the history of the Outaouais region.

They snake marched through the old town and first took over the city hall, beside the justice court which had been the initial target but was heavily guarded by police. Pumped with adrenaline, they ran through the building and out again, then began marching down Taché Boulevard, on their way to the main UQO campus. There they again met with more cops guarding every entrance. Undeterred, they located the least-guarded doors and, in an unprecedented act of defiance, attacked them, pushing aside the cops and forcing the locked doors. Over a hundred students made their way through and ran to the main entrance, which they held open for the students waiting outside, all the while creating enough ruckus to force the administration to cancel classes again.

Excitement was high, as the students celebrated their strength, but it rapidly gave way to confusion and wild rumours as the riot squad forces were assembling on both sides of the street outside. After much uncertainty, the demonstration reassembled, and walked down the street past one of the riot squads. With the mission accomplished on the main campus, there still remained the smaller, but better-defended, Lucien-Brault pavilion to take over.

This time, the now cheerful crowd avoided the road that had been the site of the mass arrests on the previous day, and marched on the main street towards downtown. Receiving encouragement from bewildered onlookers, the students marched all the way to the office of the local Liberal MPP, which was heavily protected by the riot squad. There followed a cat and mouse game between the protesters and the riot squad, across the residential Wrightville neighbourhood.

The students eventually made their way to the Lucien-Brault parking lot, much to the excitement of on looking kids from the St-Jean-Bosco elementary school, located beside it. “We’re doing it for you!”, chanted the protesters. They then gathered before the main entrance, facing an armed police line. After trying to push their way through, they were forced to retreat in face of the unrestrained use of batons and pepper spray by the cops, and just as the riot squad was making its way into the parking lot.

From there they assembled into another snake march through the neighbourhood, under a still festive atmosphere complete with brass music. After losing the riot squad on the other side of the elementary school, the students found their way to the back door of the pavilion, where they again faced extremely agitated municipal cops who were swinging their batons left and right. Several escaped the melee with either blood-covered faces or gas-stained eyes, and once again the students retreated as they saw the riot squad closing in.

A spontaneous general assembly was formed in the parking lot, where, amidst much confusion, the students decided to remain united and face the police line again at the main entrance. As the crowd was making its way to the other side of the building, a side door was found open, and over two hundred students quickly swarmed in, taking possession of the cafeteria. They were kept by the riot squad to go any farther, but by that time, the administration had been forced to cancel classes.

Outside, a larger group of protesters were trying to hold the fort, but eventually, the riot squad was able to gain control of the side door, trapping over 150 protestors inside the cafeteria. As news spread of the administrative decision to cancel classes indefinitely in view of the violence caused by the injunction, the outside protesters erupted in celebration. Victory came at a steep price once again however, as the entrapped students were arrested and taken in. Local residents came out of their homes in support of the students, heaping



abuse on the police for their brutality, while kids from the elementary school were still watching the unbelievable scene from their classroom, most certainly unaware of the implications that the battle they had just witnessed held for their own future prospects.

As the remaining students retreated and marched down to the police station in support of their arrested comrades, Red Thursday came to a close. The students had won the Battle of UQO, and a new atmosphere took grip of the Outaouais, an atmosphere of youthful rebellion. For some, Red Thursday marked the long-awaited awakening of a traditionally boring, submissive region dominated by civil servants and held in check by an unbeatable local Liberal Party machine. For Antonin Bouret, it represents foremost the “blood shed by our comrades due to police brutality, the rage which reached new heights, and the colour symbolizing the student mobilization”.

Police repression in Hull made headlines across the country, and gained the region a new reputation for its restlessness. The next week, the simple rumour of the arrival of a bus full of UQO students in solidarity with striking students at a collegial center in the town of Mont-Laurier was enough

to force the administration there to give up on respecting a similar injunction.

From there, the regional student mobilization continued. When the local cégep came under an injunction, the students triumphantly fought it back, with the administration this time not daring to call in the police. Night demos became common, leading to blockades at the casino and escalating tensions with the police, while links were established with students from the University of Ottawa eager to transport the spirit of the student strike across the river. On the May Day rally, a group of hundreds of marchers from Ottawa broke off to cross the inter-provincial bridge and demonstrate in solidarity with the students at the justice hall.

At the moment this article was written, in the dead of summer, the situation was quiet, but there reigns the sentiment that the face of the region has changed forever. Red Thursday has sparked a spirit of rebellion that may re-ignite the social struggles that shaped the history of the region. And hopefully, it will flow across the Ottawa River and help lift the consciousness of the increasingly confused and destitute group that constitutes the Ontario student population. *P*



Police and demonstrators clash at the University of Quebec en Outaouais.



# Maple Spring Part 2: Plan Nord

## WHILE THE IRON IS HOT PART IV

### APRIL 20–22: PLAN NORD, PLAN MORT

In spring 2011, Charest unveiled a new marketing campaign and a plank for getting him and his party re-elected: Plan Nord. There was a flurry of attention in the media about “one of the biggest social and environmental projects in our time,” as the government website described it; propaganda posters began appearing in the métro explaining how the plan would create jobs and bring prosperity to Québec. Anarchists were concerned, but at first it was unclear how to organize against the project.

Of course, Plan Nord is not a substantive thing in itself. It is simply the way that the government of Québec has chosen to brand its recently accelerated efforts to colonize the Labrador Peninsula, dispossess its indigenous inhabitants of their land and resources, use those resources to generate quick money, and restore confidence in the future of

Québec’s troubled capitalist economy. The south of Québec has been colonized and exploited more thoroughly, and now this area is unproductive in comparison to other advanced capitalist economies of similar size. But there is no substantive difference between what is happening in “the north” versus “the south”; it’s simply a matter of progression, with the development of the former lagging behind that of the latter for a variety of reasons. From the perspective of capitalists, it makes sense to identify potentially profitable areas that are not yet being exploited as efficiently as they could be—so the only real *policy* aspect of Plan Nord is a commitment by the government to begin fixing this situation in earnest, with certain objectives twenty-five years down the line. The rest is marketing and propaganda.

In the Labrador Peninsula, the Québécois government will allow forests to be clear-cut, rivers to be dammed, and

open-pit mines to be carved into the land, including uranium mines. An influx of workers will result in a population boom; there will be new housing in many northern towns, and probably many new towns altogether. There is even talk of constructing a deep-water port on Ungava Bay to take advantage of the Arctic Ocean's new opening to seaborne trade. To connect all these new mines, clear-cuts, and settlements, new highways will slice across the land.

Many such projects are already underway in the north, and were long before the announcement of Plan Nord. For example, Hydro-Québec, the state-owned power corporation, has been building new dams on the Romaine River since 2009 in spite of resistance by the Innu of Uashat mak Mali-Utenam. It also makes no sense to separate development in "the north" from the continuing project of squeezing profits out of "the south." Among other projects, capitalists would like to see a gold mine dug on Mohawk territory just northwest of Montréal, a new Atlantica-style highway linking Sherbrooke to New Brunswick across the forests of northern Maine, and a massive expansion of fracking all along the Saint Lawrence river valley. There is also the legislative project of loosening environmental protections, which will affect every part of the province. All of these efforts, alongside urban projects like the reconstruction of the Turcot interchange in southwest Montréal, are part of an integrated strategy of developing *unproductive* areas into *productive* areas across the entire Québécois territory.

Given that the development that is ongoing everywhere, there are specific reasons the government initiated a media campaign focusing on "the north."

*First*, greenwashing. The government promises that fifty percent of the territory north of the 49th parallel will be protected in perpetuity. For this, Charest has already won praise at the United Nations

Conference on Sustainable Development, where he was compared and contrasted favorably with climate criminal and general bogeyman Stephen Harper. Liberal environmentalists, who might have otherwise caused trouble by starting a Facebook group or running an ad in the newspaper, will be satisfied that only *half* of Québec's portion of the Labrador Peninsula will be paved or otherwise destroyed. As a result, radical Earth defenders who don't compromise on these matters will be more easily isolated and smeared as unreasonable. Similarly, the government has emphasized how many indigenous leaders are completely on board and how the creation of "economic opportunities" for indigenous people will help end the "social problems"—caused by colonialism—in their communities. And what could be a nobler goal than ending indigenous poverty?

*Second*, manifest destiny. The distinct shape of the Labrador Peninsula has often been used as a symbol of national pride, and it is this shape that has become the logo for Plan Nord. It has been a dream of nationalist intellectuals for many years that Québec's great frontier should be tamed and settled by French-speaking Québécois de souche, both because that would strengthen a Québécois claim to the entire territory in the event of independence from Canada and because it is seen as desirable in itself—even if this project is being undertaken by a federalist government. Instead of the left-wing and social-democratic strains of nationalism currently popular among young people, the development of the north offers a different vision of patriotism for those who would imagine themselves rugged individualists seeking adventure and opportunity: a nationalism that has better things to do than protest in the streets.

*Third*, inspiring confidence in the Québécois economy. Since spring 2011, the premier has flown around the United States, Europe, and twice to





**Photo:** On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the SQ dismantle a blockade built by Innu land defenders on Highway 138 in the Côte-Nord region.



**Photo:** Militants block the entrance to a skyscraper in downtown Montréal on the morning of April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Brazil to present a flashy PowerPoint presentation to potential investors about the enormous wealth that is about to be torn from the ground. Québec has long had a bad reputation in international business circles because of its strong(er) unions, its bureaucracy, its (allegedly greater) corruption and organized crime, its frustrating (albeit widely ignored) language laws, and its (somewhat) restive population. In the context of global financial worry, the Plan Nord campaign emphasizes two points. First, that there is a solid *plan* to rocket out of Québec's socialist malaise, and second, that this

territory is one of the largest remaining landmasses in the world that has not yet been thoroughly exploited—so there is a lot of cash to be made. The campaign also aims to inspire confidence in Québécois workers who might be concerned about job opportunities in the province.

Before the strike, resistance to Plan Nord had consisted of little more than a few speaking events, less-than-rowdy protests outside conferences and ministerial meetings, pranks pulled on apolitical engineering students, and workshops situating Plan Nord in the context of the continuing colonial processes of Canada and Québec. Once the strike started, this changed. In connection to the students' struggle against tuition, but looking beyond it, anarchists were able to mobilize significant numbers of people for actions.

On March 12<sup>th</sup>, a week after the Sûreté du Québec dismantled a blockade that the Innu of Uashat mak Mali-Utenam had built on Highway 138 to defend their lands around the Romaine River, about two hundred people demonstrated their solidarity in Montréal in front of the headquarters of Hydro-Québec. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, there was a morning manif-action blocking workers from entering a downtown skyscraper housing the offices of Golden Valley Mines, Quebec Lithium, and Canadian Royalties, companies that really have no business existing but which also happen to be heavily involved in the renewed colonization of the north. This action, which caused significant disruption for about an hour, presaged the larger skyscraper blockades that followed.

These actions were part of a growing wave of struggle against Plan Nord, but—along with almost everything else that had happened over the course of the strike up to that point—they were overshadowed by what occurred when Charest decided to bring his well-practiced speech to downtown Montréal at the Salon Plan Nord, a giant job fair and pro-

development propaganda festival held on April 20<sup>th</sup> at the city's premier convention center, the Palais des congrès.

Four demos were called for April 20<sup>th</sup>: one by No One is Illegal, one by a group of Innu women who were walking to Montréal from the Côte-Nord as a means of protest, one by anarchists (including those who had organized the events of March 12<sup>th</sup> and April 2<sup>nd</sup>), and a fourth—by far the largest—by CLASSE. All four started in the hour before noon, so militants had to choose between which one they wanted to attend. Anarchists largely opted for the smaller, non-CLASSE demos.

When people recount the story of April 20, the No One is Illegal demo is often forgotten. For one thing, it was the smallest of the three confrontational demos; for another, it had a different theme from the others. The participants in the other demonstrations might have opposed Plan Nord because neoliberal governments won't redistribute natural resource wealth in a properly socialist fashion, because the industrial death machine that is Civilization should be ruthlessly annihilated, or because of some other nuanced analysis regarding present matters—but all of them were going to the same place, to oppose the same policies, and hopefully to get uncomfortably close to the same despicable person. The target of the No One is Illegal demonstration, on the other hand, was an agent of the federal government rather than the provincial one: Jason Kenney, the immigration minister, a racist scumbag certainly deserving of some uncomfortable proximity in his own right.

Kenney was in town to deliver a talk called "Targeted, Fast, and Efficient Immigration Systems with Focus on Jobs and Growth" at the Hilton Bonaventure hotel. He was arguing, essentially, that the demands of the market should be the most important factor determining who can immigrate to Canada. About 100 people were on the steps outside the hotel in a non-confrontational demonstration.



There were also two groups of people who intended to cause disruptions inside. The first group, ten to fifteen people, entered the building up to two hours before and waited, disguised as Starbucks customers. The second group arrived shortly before the event was scheduled to begin, brazenly running into the building before security could lock the doors. Both groups converged in the building, fought their way past the security officers in the hotel lobby, and shook the final set of doors off their hinges. They burst through triumphantly, and—to their surprise—found themselves in an empty room.

At this point, they missed the opportunity to overturn tables of expensive food and glassware, but their faces were not concealed and security officers were taking lots of pictures. The police who had been outside watching the demonstration at the steps arrived, but everyone managed to escape to the street. There were no arrests and everything was over by 1pm, so the participants were able to participate in later events. Later on, once the speech had *actually* started—much later than planned—other infiltrators with tickets to the event disrupted it.

Meanwhile, the anarchist demonstration started at Square Phillips in central downtown. Four groups were collaborating on it: La Mauvaise Herbe (a green anarchist collective), the Collective Against Civilization, the Anti-Colonial

**Photo:** The anarchist demonstration leaves Square Phillips on April 20<sup>th</sup>.



**Photo:** Some participants in the CLASSE demonstration on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Solidarity Collective, and PASC (*Projet accompagnement solidarité Colombie*, which organizes locally in solidarity with the struggles of people in Colombia). Whether or not all the members of these groups would describe themselves as anarchists, the discourse around the demonstration was explicitly anti-state, promoting self-determination and autonomous action. Green-and-black flags on bamboo poles were distributed in the crowd.

The original plan for this demonstration, decided long before the CLASSE demo was called for, was to march around downtown delivering speeches at specific locations—buildings housing the offices of corporations involved in mining, construction, and so on—and eventually reach the Palais des congrès where it could divide into a disruptive component and a more child-friendly component. This wasn't what happened, though. While the demo was still roaming central downtown, participants received calls that there was an urgent need for more people at the Palais des congrès.

CLASSE's demonstration had started at Berri Square and marched directly to the palace to confront Charest, reaching the palace's eastern side on rue Saint-Urbain. Militants bypassed the line of riot cops at the front door by storming the parking garage. In the palace's

eastern lobby, there was a prolonged confrontation between unarmored cops and demonstrators who were determined to ascend the escalators to the job fair. Eventually, riot cops arrived to push the crowd out of the building and then out of the area altogether. Many had already opted to withdraw before the police charge forced everyone out.

This was the news that participants in the anarchist demo were receiving from the Palais des congrès. Some of them wanted to cancel the original plan and rush to the palace; others wanted to stick to the planned route, while still others wanted to join the Innu women's demo outside the headquarters of Hydro-Québec, just up the hill from the palace. This debate, which took place bilingually in the middle of a moving demonstration, went on too long for those who wanted to proceed immediately to the palace; they split off. Shortly thereafter, the organizers announced that the remainder would be going to Hydro-Québec. This meant that both groups were heading in the same direction on parallel streets, with the first group about a block and a half ahead.

At this point, all four demonstrations were converging in roughly the same area, but this was still *a very large area* containing an enormous number of people. Some demonstrators were closer to the headquarters of Hydro-Québec on boulevard René-Lévesque, others on rue Saint-Urbain were in the process of getting chased from the east side of the palace by riot cops, while still others were grappling with unarmored cops and breaking windows at the west side of the palace, at the intersection of rue de Bleury and avenue Viger. At Hydro-Québec, many were pushing to move back down towards the palace, while others argued that people should leave so as not to bring repression upon the Innu elders; meanwhile, the riot police moved down Viger from the east side of the palace to the west side. Coming from the crowd on René-Lévesque, from

**Videos** of the Breach of *Palais des congrès* can be found online at [guelphpeak.org](http://guelphpeak.org)



the anarchist demo, and elsewhere, most militants who wanted to fight gravitated towards the intersection of Viger and de Bleury. This location became a continuous flashpoint.

Demonstrators tried repeatedly to approach the Palais des congrès, while the police endeavored to prevent this, bloodying the demonstrators in the process. At first, the riot police made several charges, at one point forcing the entire crowd down Viger as far west as Square Victoria. But people kept coming back, and they quickly figured out that they didn't have to run together in a straight line down the street, but could also escape into the open square southwest of the intersection or to the parking lot on the hill to the northwest. When the police sallied forth too far, they could be themselves surrounded: a whole group of riot officers was briefly encircled and pelted with stones before they used their superior weaponry and armor to force their way out. They could also be injured: during one police attack, two cops were felled by stones and had to be carried away, one appearing to be unconscious and the other suffering from a serious limp. For two hours, people attacked the Palais, ran away, then attacked again.

To the surprise of those in the streets, during this entire time, the small platoon of riot police protecting that side of the palace *never once received reinforcements*.

The police were critically understaffed that day. Large numbers of officers were trying to monitor events throughout downtown, but Montréal frequently deploys *massive* numbers of riot cops to control riotous situations, even as many as three hundred, while this seemed to be about fifty or sixty. The obvious reason is that April 20 came on a Friday, the last day in a long week of manif-actions and passive demos—the police often did not know which would be which, and had to prepare for both—and this week came on the heels of several other weeks like it. The police force *as a whole* was worn out, not up to its best game. This is why it was on April 20 that the SQ was first called into the streets of Montréal: they were needed to relieve the pressure on the cops in the SPVM.

The events of April 20<sup>th</sup> showed the growing power of militants in the streets. Many of them had become experienced street fighters over the course of a few weeks; many were enraged after continuous police attacks on their demonstrations and pickets. It was not only pragmatic but also cathartic to attack these forces in return.

The geography helped, too. The Palais des congrès sits at a lower elevation than its surroundings, with a low hill on either side to the north and south. The area is full of tight streets and alleys in which militants in light clothing are more mobile

**Photos:** left, A street fighter throws a rock on April 20. right, A riot cop shoots a flare at anti-Charest party crashers





**Photos:** left, A street fighter faces west on avenue Viger, with the parking lot to the left.  
right, The parking lot, full of militants.

than police, but also large open areas where it is logistically impossible to kettle demonstrators. The parking lot also played an important role: it provided cover from snipers shooting plastic bullets, a refuge in which to duck away from police charges, and a vantage point from which to throw stones. It also appeared that the cops were hesitant to douse the cars parked there in tear gas. Finally, that area of downtown was full of broken stones and debris for making barricades.

The confrontation at this intersection lasted for perhaps two hours. During this time, militants were frequently forced to move from place to place, but they held one location continuously: the intersection of rues Saint-Alexandre and de la Gauchetière, just beyond the top of the parking lot. There were anarchists gathered there at all times. The police never sallied forth that far, and it was out of the line of sight from the palace. Whenever street fighters got separated from their comrades, they could go there to find others they knew.

Even though events felt urgent and fast-paced throughout, in retrospect it might have been useful for some people to hold an impromptu assembly at that intersection to determine whether there were things that could be done to improve the odds for the street fighting. Could supplies have been obtained from elsewhere? There was time. Could a collective strategy have been hashed out? Probably not, but some problems could have been pointed out, such as the fact that many people were throwing rocks without masks in the full glare of media cameras. Exactly what should and what should not be communicated in the streets is unclear, but it's clear that sharing information multiplies combat effectiveness and that this "safe zone" might have been a good place to share information.

When people decided to leave the flashpoint at the western end of the palace, they did so of their own volition, albeit without any discernable collective process. Participants found themselves gathered in large numbers at the safe zone



after another police attack, certainly not defeated, but the crowd started cheering and moving towards Square Victoria. From there, they marched rowdily to rue Saint-Urbain via rue Saint-Jacques, attacking the Centre du commerce mondiale and other locations on the way. At the eastern end of the palace, the bulk of demonstrators joined the “green zone”<sup>2</sup> part of the protest. Counter to the common conception of a “green zone” group, this one had been offering sandwiches and backrubs to street fighters that wandered over, including those in black bloc attire. They did this while making music and entertaining some would-be seekers of employment—who were locked out of the Salon Plan Nord for the duration of the chaos—with weird anti-civilization street theater.

On the eastern side of avenue Viger, at its intersection with rue Saint-Urbain, a line of unarmored police with nightsticks blocked the street. As some marchers proceeded north into the Chinese Quarter, militants attacked the cops with projectiles; others soon joined in. The

cops backed up as militants approached, until they turned and fled west down the avenue to hide behind the line of riot police running east from the western flashpoint. Like sharks smelling blood, street fighters gave chase to the injured officers. This was the first time in the strike that a large number of police didn’t just retreat slowly from an angry crowd, but bolted in fear. A certain body of theory suggests that events like this one are important for the morale of oppressed people; events shortly after April 20<sup>th</sup> seem to corroborate this. In the following two weeks, there were three other *extremely confrontational demos*: April 25<sup>th</sup>, May Day, and May 4<sup>th</sup> in the town of Victoriaville.

The riot cops, unfortunately, attacked vigorously and forced militants back into the main crowd, marching north through the Chinese Quarter up to rue Sainte-Catherine.

It is unclear why exactly the march left the area. It is certainly possible that, by this point, after at least three hours of street fighting in that vicinity, people were simply bored of that spot

**Photo:** Property destruction on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>At counter-summit convergences in the turn-of-the-millennium “anti-globalization” era, different demonstrations would often be classified as green zones, yellow zones, or red zones. Red zones were the most dangerous areas to demonstrate, often the places where street fighting would take place. Yellow zones involved less disruptive or confrontational forms of direct action, and were therefore considered less dangerous. All effort was made to make green zones “safer spaces” without significant risk of repression.





**Photo:** The April 22<sup>nd</sup> demonstration on the eastern slope of Mount Royal

and wanted to go wreak havoc on the rest of downtown. It was around this time, however, that the Sûreté du Québec finally arrived to relieve the SPVM of their duties defending the Palais, enabling Montréal's police force to regroup and mount a more relentless attack on the demo, ultimately breaking it up.

Many people had already left at this point, satisfied with what they'd accomplished, and everyone was fatigued. Before dispersing, the crowd walked past the headquarters of the SPVM on rue Sainte-Catherine and found many empty police vehicles in the parking lot; several street fighters ran into the lot, smashed windows with hammers, dropped cinderblocks on the windshields, and generally did as much damage as possible until cops in vans rolled in to attack them.

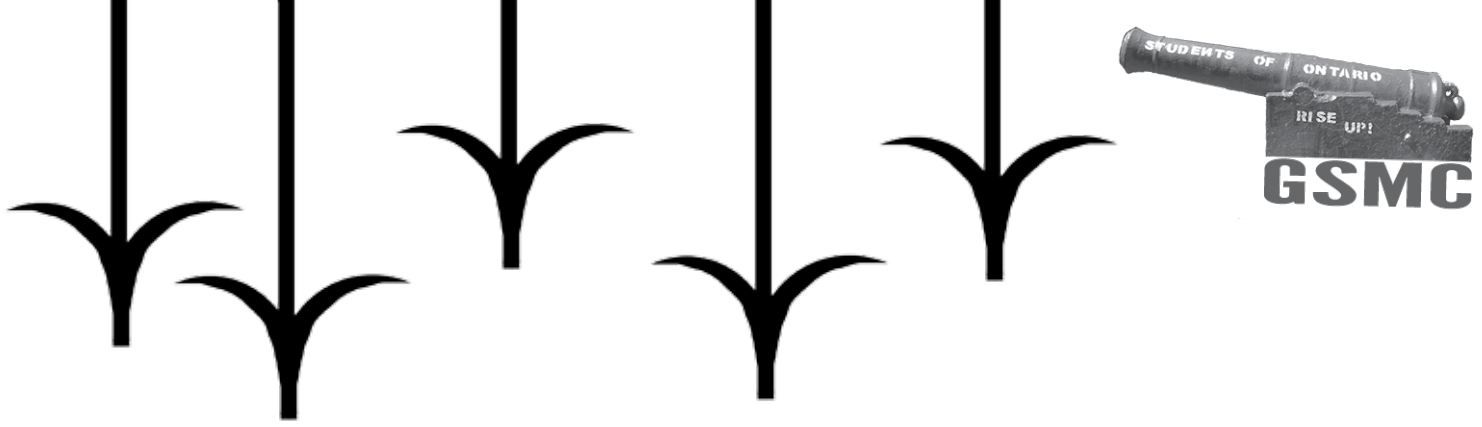
It rained heavily on the second day of the job fair. Only about 200 people showed up to demonstrate; supposedly a group of them once again entered the palace's parking garage and began vandalizing vehicles parked there. This

was the SPVM's justification for arresting a total of 90 people that day.

Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the weather was nice again, and the joint demonstration for Earth Day and the student strike was larger than the last "national" demonstration on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. There were between 250,000 and 300,000 people in the streets.

Many consider the weekend of April 20<sup>th</sup> to be the moment that the movement transcended its limits as a *student* movement, or even an *anti-austerity* movement, and blossomed into a genuinely *anti-capitalist* and *anti-systemic* revolt with a more *total* critique behind it. Demonstrators' targets included the Liberal government, but also many institutions of capitalism, in particular the police. Perhaps this was because Plan Nord is going to add a tremendous amount of carbon to the atmosphere—a totalizing issue if there ever was one—and because it is a manifestation of capitalism in its most basic accumulative form. In any case, *it felt good*, and that feeling carried over into the following weeks.

*Continued on Page 38...*



## Fight for Equality, Down With Tuition Fees!

by Roisin Lyder

The government would like students to believe that the twin issues of skyrocketing tuition fees and ever-mounting student debt have no negative impact on the accessibility of education or quality of life for students. After all, enrollment in post-secondary education has increased along with the increase in tuition fees and the Ontario government assures us “that high quality post-secondary education is accessible to all qualified candidates” in our province.<sup>1</sup> However, despite what we are told, high tuition fees and heavy debt loads do affect the accessibility of post-secondary education in a crucial way. Namely, they create barriers to education for low income and marginalized students. The promise of an educational system that could provide equal access and opportunities to anyone eager to learn has been trashed by years of government policy that push a high-fees and high-debt system for post-secondary education. Rather than encouraging access to education, these policies have actually reinforced economic inequality and systemic discrimination within society.

Who you are and how much money you have matters when it comes to accessing post-secondary education in Canada. Despite the relatively small disparity in academic achievement between low and high-income high school students, research shows that twice as many students from the wealthiest families attend post-

secondary education in comparison to students from the poorest families.<sup>2</sup> This is hardly a surprise given the hefty price tag of a post-secondary degree or diploma. High user fees reproduce economic inequality by discouraging low-income students from pursuing and completing post-secondary degrees. They also entrench systemic discrimination since it is members of marginalized groups who are most likely to be unable to afford the fees.

In order to understand how tuition fees perpetuate systemic discrimination, we must understand the position of marginalized groups in the Canadian economy. For example, women still earn only seventy cents for every dollar that men earn.<sup>3</sup> In Ontario, racialized people are overrepresented in the lowest income brackets and earn on average twenty-two percent less than non-racialized individuals. Racialized women, subject to gendered and race-based discrimination, earn the least.<sup>4</sup> Downloading the cost of education from the public and onto the individual only serves to deepen these existing inequalities. Not only does earning less money make paying for school more challenging, it also means that low income and marginalized students end up paying more for the very same education in the long run.

Picture two students: one a man, one a woman, who each complete a degree with a debt of 30 000 dollars. Since the

<sup>1</sup> Published Results-based Plan 2011/12, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

<sup>2</sup> The Impact of Government Underfunding on Students, Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario.

<sup>3</sup> Women and Tuition Hikes, Stop the Hikes.

<sup>4</sup> The Racialized Impact of High Tuition Fees, Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario.

woman earns less, every month after graduation she will have to spend more of her income in order to repay her loan. Not only will she spend a higher proportion of her overall income, but she will also be forced to

## Debt levels are linked to lower graduation levels and reduce the likelihood of continuing to study beyond a bachelor's degree.

take longer to repay the loan and thus pay more in interest. It is a similar situation for racialized students. Requiring individuals to 'invest' in their future through high tuition fees and debt-based financial systems ultimately requires marginalized students to pay more. Such a system is thus inherently discriminatory since it charges those who must borrow money more than those who can pay up front or quickly eliminate their debt. Consequently, affluent students are favoured over the less affluent.

The more money an individual must borrow to complete her education the more the education will cost due to accumulated interest. But, it is not just the interest accumulation that discriminates against marginalized students. It is also the fact that marginalized students are more likely to need loans and to incur heavier debt loads in order to attend school in the first place. For example, even if a racialized student was to earn comparable income to her non-racialized counterpart upon graduation, it is likely that she would have taken on more initial debt and still have to pay more.

Heavy debt can be crushing for many students. Young people who graduate with debt have lower net worth, are less likely to own a home, and less likely to have any

savings.<sup>5</sup> Policy analysts agree that there is a benchmark for when loan repayment becomes unmanageable. This benchmark indicates that the maximum level of manageable educational debt is around eight percent of an individual's monthly income. And once again, marginalized students suffer the most. For example, in Ontario, monthly loan payments represent over thirteen percent of the average income of a West Asian woman, higher than any other group.<sup>6</sup>

Quality of life during school is also negatively impacted for students who are required to take on educational debt. Debt levels are linked to lower graduation levels and reduce the likelihood of continuing to study beyond a bachelor's degree. Low-income students are also more likely to work during school and to work longer hours.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the psychological impact of accumulating massive debt while studying is difficult to assess but must be a significant factor for most debt-burdened students.

There is plenty of research describing the difficulties created by a high tuition/high debt education system on low-income students, women and racialized students. However, there are less statistics about students from other marginalized backgrounds, but there are certainly indicators that suggest that high tuition fees disproportionately affect them also. For example, queer and trans students are more likely to face personal challenges, such as being alienated by their families after coming out, that may require them to take on larger debt loads. Muslim students can also face barriers to accessing education in our current climate due to religious beliefs that forbid them from taking interest-bearing loans. Muslim students with

**5** Under Pressure: The Impact of Rising Tuition Fees on Ontario Families, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

**6** The Racialized Impact of High Tuition Fees, Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario.

**7** Student Debt, Education is a Right.



no choice but to take out loans to pay for their education suffer especially from the psychological impact of looming debt repayment.

Thankfully, we don't have to resign ourselves to this grim reality. There are other ways of funding the post-secondary system that do not serve to further economic and social inequality in Canada. A progressive tax system could easily pay for the education system in Canada with the benefit of reducing discrimination and eliminating student debt. But ultimately, the increase in funding required to pay for education need not come from ordinary people at all. In Ontario, corporate tax cuts introduced in 2009 are estimated to have

cost the province 1.6 billion dollars during the last school year alone. Funding the education system (and any social program) is a question of political priorities, despite the pretense of no money to be found.

Rapidly increasing tuition fees and debt-based financial assistance are the major features of Ontario's discriminatory education policy. A free and publicly funded post-secondary education system will be an important step towards dismantling the systemic inequality that marginalized groups face and would help to reduce economic inequality overall. Fight discrimination! Join the movement for free, accessible, public education! **P**

## Squarely in the Red

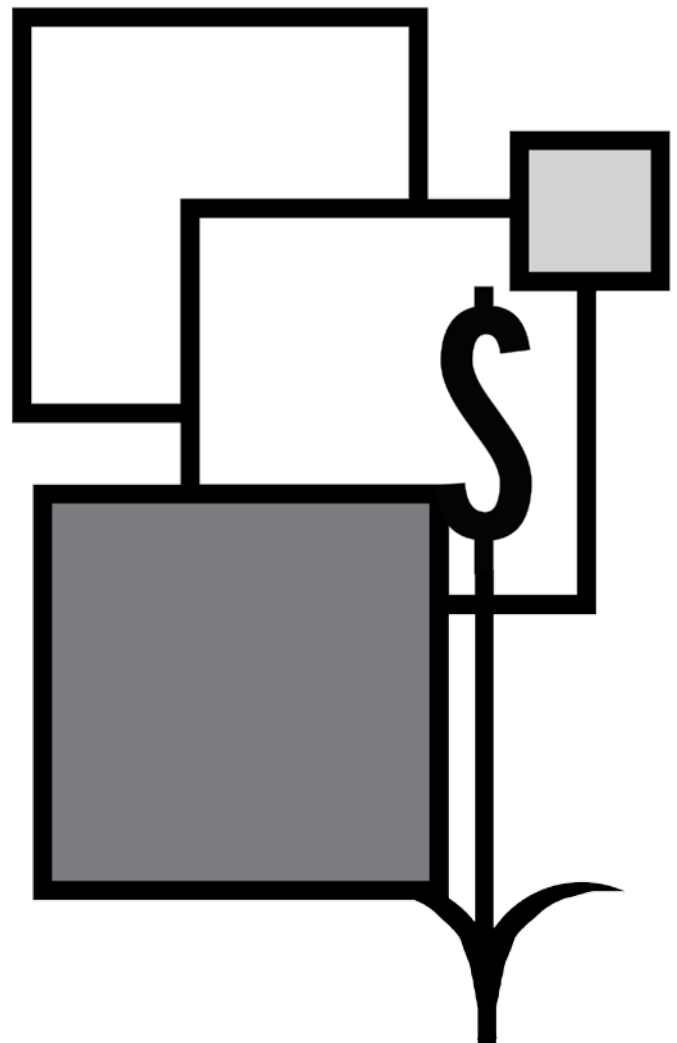
by Juanita Burnett  
August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Squarely in the Red  
Contemplating debt:  
the way to get ahead;  
the rectangle of paper –  
protection from regret

Falling into debt –  
only two years left, then  
the future road I've paved  
will ease the balance back.

Sinking with the debt, my hope.  
Crushing pressure; finish!  
Join increasing others  
seeking vanished rewards.

Buried in the red cold  
dead sea of debt,  
gone forever under.  
Squarely in the red.





## Maple Spring Part 3: May, May Day & the Victoriaville Riot

### WHILE THE IRON IS HOT PART V

#### APRIL 24 TO MAY 16: THE FIRST WAVE OF NIGHT DEMONSTRATIONS

**T**hroughout the entire course of the strike—in fact, from December 6, 2010, when the student federations walked out of the meeting with the government and CRÉPUQ—the government had refused to negotiate with student representatives. Charest and his education minister, Line Beauchamp, were open to discussing the situation with the presidents of FÉCQ and FÉUQ, but categorically refused to sit down with CLASSE until the group denounced violence and reined in its rowdier members. They singled out comments made by Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, a spokesperson for CLASSE, in early April for particular ridicule: “We [the executive of CLASSE] have no mandate from our members to advocate violence or to denounce it.”

April 22<sup>nd</sup>, on the second day of their weekend congress, CLASSE approved

a motion that was reported in the media as a denunciation of violence, sometimes as a denunciation of “physical violence.” It was *not*, in fact, a categorical denunciation of everything that could be construed as violence; it was only a rejection of violence against people, and even here, there was a caveat allowing for self-defense. The membership would not have countenanced any stronger, but CLASSE’s media committee spun the statement in a positive way and the media accepted it. This was enough for the government to announce on Monday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, that it would sit down with CLASSE at the negotiating table, on one condition: no disruptive demonstrations during the negotiating period.

The CLASSE executive body agreed to this condition. This was both controversial and complicated. It just so happened that CLASSE had no actions planned for the next two days anyway, so it was possible that the exec was only committing to two

days without disruption—although some believe that, without a mandate to do so, the representatives were cementing a truce that would have lasted longer. In any case, a demonstration that had been planned for the night of Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, which was not organized by CLASSE itself but by a striking department at UQÀM. It was postponed for one night, supposedly because of bad weather conditions, even though *we're talking about Québec here*—people had been marching in snowstorms throughout February. Incidentally, the weather turned out to be great. Many saw this as the CLASSE exec putting pressure on the department, although it could very well have been an effort on the part of the department to respect the truce negotiated by the exec—in which case one wonders why they made up the stupid excuse about the weather.

Some militants unaffiliated with the striking UQÀM department, and opposed to the truce, organized their own demonstration for the same time and place. It gathered at Berri Square and took off into the streets. Although only a small part of the crowd engaged in confrontation, there was practically no one present who wanted to interfere with others' efforts to throw rocks at the police or smash the windows of banks. Not much happened, and the police eventually dispersed the crowd, making five arrests. It was enough, however, for Beauchamp to kick CLASSE out of the negotiations on Wednesday morning. The CLASSE exec insisted that it hadn't endorsed the demo, that the demo had been organized against its wishes, but Beauchamp accused CLASSE of playing both sides, noting that the Facebook event for the demo was linked from the coalition's website. In solidarity with CLASSE's chastised spokespeople, the leaders of FÉCQ and FÉUQ walked out of the negotiations as well.

That night, April 25<sup>th</sup>, the postponed demo—billed as an OSTIE DE GROSSE MANIF DE SOIR, which loses much of

its charm when translated to “big fucking night demo”—was much bigger and involved a much wider *variety* of people, including a significant number of people more politically aligned with FÉCQ and FÉUQ, few of whom had participated in CLASSE's campaign of economic disruption. It's conceivable that many of them had only been in the streets in the large passive demonstrations organized by the reformist federations; when large numbers of people began fighting the police, it could very well have been the first time they had ever been around that sort of thing.

When the crowd gathered at Berri Square that night, many different groups bloc'ed up in different parts of the square, announcing their presence to each other using white bike lights. For whatever reason, they had chosen not to gather at the square together, but to keep their distance from one another; this is the only time this happened during the strike. When the crowd started moving, there was a group of about seventy street fighters at the front of the demo and another group of about fifty around the middle; the latter group was unaware of the first group until it passed through areas that had sustained considerable property destruction. Both groups began collecting stones and chunks of pavement early on, saving them in bags. Over the course of the night, police were consistently attacked and forced

**“The SPVM's Neighborhood Post 21 was the target of *casseurs* [hooligans or thugs], with many of its windows broken. The police officers inside said they had been afraid to see a Molotov cocktail being thrown through the openings in the windows.”**  
*-an article in La Presse (French)*



to retreat under a hail of stones. At one point, a police substation was attacked for several minutes; one media source reported that police officers were fearful during the attack that a Molotov cocktail might be thrown in. The riot lasted three hours.

After April 25<sup>th</sup>, the high point of confrontation for the night demos, things quickly calmed down as peace police—in French, *les paci-flics*, i.e., *pacifiste* + the word for “cop”—increasingly began attacking street fighters: sometimes simply trying to dissuade them, other times to demask them or render them directly into the hands of the authorities. Although confrontational actions continued throughout the period of night demonstrations from April 25<sup>th</sup> to just before the weekend of the anarchist book fair in May, they became a lot more dangerous. On several occasions in early May, the SPVM thanked “the collaborators” on its Twitter account. Anarchists continued to distribute propaganda critiquing pacifism and arguing for diverse tactics—but generally speaking, confrontational action died down until May 16<sup>th</sup>.

One of the three people the SPVM accused of committing acts of mischief during the Grande Mascarade on March 29<sup>th</sup>, had been arrested on Tuesday,

April 24<sup>th</sup> for allegedly breaching release conditions forbidding her from participating in any demonstration that was declared an illegal assembly. She was released on Wednesday morning, with no modifications to her conditions, after the bail had been paid. That night, she was arrested a second time.

The SPVM reported to the court that Emma had once again breached her conditions. In fact, as security camera footage from the métro showed, she was not present in the demo at the time that the police alleged she was. Regardless, she ended up spending four nights at the Tanguay Prison for Women in the northern neighborhood of Ahuntsic; during this time, about 75 people showed up to participate in a noise demonstration that marched the sixteen blocks west from Henri-Bourassa métro station to the prison. When she was released on April 30, her conditions had been modified: in three days’ time, she would no longer be allowed on the Island of Montréal for any reason. She had been exiled.

## MAY 1: CREATIVE DESTRUCTION IN MONTRÉAL

In Québec, the major labor unions continue to observe May Day as International Workers’ Day; this has generally been to the disadvantage of those who want to turn May Day into a day of confrontation with capitalism and the state. For many years, there was no discrete anti-capitalist demonstration. Instead, anarchists and party communists participated in the union march, collaborating in their own marginalization even as they distributed propaganda in hopes of “changing the consciousness of the workers” or something to that effect.

In 2009, a separate march of mostly Maoists and anarchists was organized downtown, which traveled to the financial district; there was no confrontation, because everyone was waiting for someone else to start things. In 2010, as



**Photo:** In solidarity with a comrade arrested the previous day, comrades march to the prison where she is being held on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

part of its campaign to mobilize people in Montréal to participate in the resistance to the G20 summit in Toronto, the recently reconstituted CLAC organized a demonstration that saw a few banner drops and a little graffiti. Things heated up in 2011, where there was more significant confrontation with the police.

In 2012, CLAC endorsed a call from Occupy Oakland for a worldwide general strike on May Day, and called explicitly for “direct action” as well as “creative destruction”. Perhaps because CLAC is not an exclusively anarchist organization, there was also a call for an anarchist contingent during the demonstration that emphasized confrontation even more explicitly: “Make sure you know to stay tight and only throw from the front,” it says, addressing problems that continue to plague street actions in Montréal. It also called for people to dress in black.

The demonstration started on the Champ de Mars, just in front of Montréal City Hall, and quickly moved towards the downtown core. It may have featured the largest black bloc that has ever taken the streets of Montréal—perhaps 300 people. Unfortunately, this didn’t result in the resounding success of April 20<sup>th</sup>.

The police were well-prepared for a confrontation, and acted more decisively to break up the march than they had at any other point during the strike. Before any property destruction had taken place, the police declared the demonstration illegal. A tactical group walking alongside the middle part of the crowd charged almost immediately after the declaration, breaking the march in two. At the intersection of rues University and Sainte-Catherine and nearby, street fighters confronted the aforementioned riot police and managed to hold their own for some time.

Soon, however, more police rushed in from the south, and chased the demonstration for several blocks. They did this by playing a sort of game of leapfrog. When demonstrators ran from



**Photos from Top:** May Day 2011. ; A portion of the crowd assembled for May Day as the demonstration leaves the Champ de Mars. ; There were lots of Maoists, as well. ; Part of the black bloc, walking past the Palais de justice towards central downtown.



a line of riot police, the slower police would load into a fleet of riot vans, which would then drive past another line of riot police already deployed ahead and quickly unload to chase the anarchists another short distance before repeating the process.

The relentless chase strategy had three effects:

1. It made it very difficult to counterattack, although some put up a heroic effort;
2. it made it much harder for demonstrators to determine strategically which direction to move
3. it exhausted many people, forcing them to duck down side streets or alleys to recover their breath.

During the chase, a small group of militants—a fraction of those who were bloc'ed up—tried to fight the police by running ahead, gathering projectiles, and then either falling back or waiting a moment so they could throw what they had on hand before running ahead again. It is possible that, if more people had attacked the police instead of running,



**Photo:** donuts used to taunt police on May Day.

things could have gone differently. In the event, though, this was not a very wide effort.

In one of the most memorable images of May Day, 2012, a group of masked militants taunted police with donuts dangling on strings from sticks. These cops were in the tactical group that managed to divide the demo so decisively. The donut gag was funny, and it still is funny. If even a fraction of the people in the streets that day had been ready to *strike first*, however, those cops would have been forced to retreat and we might have had a resounding victory rather than a cheap laugh.

### Photos Clockwise from top Left:

Looking good, May Day 2012. ; Kicking a canister back at the police. ; Militants fought back briefly against an overwhelming police presence on May Day. ; Street Fighter University on the rue Sainte-Catherine.





If the general assemblies that later emerged out of the casserole demos—discussed below—had existed before May 1<sup>st</sup>, it would have been interesting if an attempt at a general strike could have been organized, similar to what took place in Barcelona on March 29, with roving picket lines in neighborhoods and comprehensive shutdowns of many workplaces. It's unfortunate that workplace-oriented groups like Montréal's Industrial Workers of the World didn't take the call seriously despite inquiries from other anarchists. CLAC, for its part, deemed itself incapable of organizing a general strike.

2012 marked a further marginalization of the passive union demo. Whereas the year before, the two demonstrations had consisted of roughly equal numbers, at least twice as many people attended the anti-capitalist demo this year.

In discussing May Day, it's worth noting that the anarchist callout was controversial among anarchists themselves. Many assessed it as pure posturing that accomplished nothing except to draw more heat to the May Day demonstration, thus facilitating its repression. This critique assumes that, if not for the callout, the numbers of police—or their preparation, or their willingness to attack the demonstration—would have been significantly less, while the number of militants properly prepared for confrontation would not have been significantly less. It is impossible to know what would have happened, of course, but considering the recent history of May Day and the troublemaking pedigree of CLAC, it seems unlikely that the police presence *wouldn't* have been overwhelming.

#### **MAY 4: THE BATTLE OF VICTO**

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, the Liberal Party announced that it would hold its annual conference in the small city of Victoriaville, two hours from Montréal and an hour and a half from Québec City. The downtown hotel in Montréal

where the event was previously scheduled to take place was too vulnerable to blockading, and the Liberals hoped that enough distance from the metropolis would prevent militants from causing too much trouble. CLASSE, other student associations, and some community organizations and labor unions swiftly announced that they would send buses.

The convention was held at the Hôtel le Victorin on the northwestern outskirts of town, in an area of empty parking lots and fields punctuated by low-lying buildings. Victo doesn't have its own municipal police department; consequently, defense was to be provided by the SQ, a force that is much less experienced with "crowd control" situations and less sophisticated in its approach to street fighters than the SPVM. With the adversary and the terrain so different, the Battle of Victo played out differently than anything that happened in Montréal.

On the strikers' part, some basic things weren't organized at all, which might have been less problematic if it had been communicated clearly in advance. Many people were under the impression that CLASSE was organizing a genuine convergence in Victo, for example, with a place where people could spend the night for the duration of the convention. It is unclear if anyone had any serious intention to do this. In theory, the Cégep de Victoriaville—at which the student association had rejected the tactic of a student strike, if not necessarily the movement's goals—could have been used for this purpose with the collaboration of pro-strike students there. Ironically, the Liberals saw to it that the school was closed on Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, with the school administrators implying that vandalism might take place on the campus.

The buses unloaded in the parking lot of a Wal-Mart about twenty minutes' walk south of the Victorin. When enough people had gathered, they marched straight up the street and confronted the suited-up SQ police stationed behind

**Photos:** Top Left, At the entrance to the Hôtel le Victorin, just before things got hectic on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Top Right, The cloud of tear gas was very thick near the hotel. The smoke bombs contributed too. Bottom Left, Immediately before the SQ attacked the crowd on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Bottom Right, Officers shooting tear gas at demonstrators.

low metal barricades just in front of the southernmost entrance of the hotel. Quickly, the police found themselves under a barrage consisting mostly of empty plastic water bottles but also a few smoke bombs, while all around them, people shook the barricades and started to dismantle them. It wouldn't have been particularly difficult to jump over the barricades and rush the visibly frightened police, and probably even breach the hotel—but people were hesitant to go on the offensive too quickly and the police were allowed to don gas masks in front of the crowd without concealing what they were doing.

Once again, militants were hesitant to attack first. The results were predictable.

Soon, tear gas canisters were launched and many people were forced to retreat from the hotel. This environment was unlike anything street fighters had known in Montréal. Much of the area was completely open: fields, parking lots, and empty roads, the locals knowing better

than to approach the warzone. There was a residential subdivision nearby and many dug-up plots of land, providing more stones than could be found on the most crumbling downtown city street. Four different lines of confrontation appeared, with street fighters hailing projectiles upon the police at each, taking the green recycling bins from people's homes to shield themselves from rubber bullets while the residents looked on. The air was thick with a gas much stronger than anything that had been used in Montréal, and it was difficult for those who hadn't come prepared with gas masks or at least vinegar-soaked bandanas and goggles to stay close to the action. People did all the same.

Many reported afterwards that Victo was the most intense experience they had ever had. The number of injuries was staggering. One militant, Maxence Valade, became the second person to lose an eye, and another, Alex Allard, nearly died from injuries to his head. At least three other people were carried away in stretchers. The SQ, instilled

since the 1970s with the idea that they might one day become the military force of an independent Québec, wear army-green uniforms reminiscent of Soviet soldiers and utilize armored personnel carriers. For the duration of the conflict, their helicopter flew terrifyingly low to the ground, presumably to intimidate.

An SQ riot bus that was surrounded by the crowd for quite some time wasn't given any attention by street fighters until late in the evening. At that point, people started smashing its windows and spray painting it, prompting a lone officer to tackle one vandal in an attempted arrest. Other militants responded and the officer was beaten until he released his captive. A patrol car lurking behind the demonstration tried to intervene, but fighters surrounded it and smashed its



windows at close range with the officers inside; they retreated, abandoning their rescue attempt. It took a charge involving a large number of riot cops to save the lone officer.

There were only four arrests during the day. After it became clear that the majority of militants were no longer interested in being bombarded with projectiles, the crowd retreated to the Wal-Mart parking lot and mostly loaded into buses without incident. Three buses that left later than the others were stopped by the SQ on the way out of town, and one of these—the bus rented by organizers based at McGill and Concordia—was ordered to return to the SQ station in Victo so the teargas-soaked passengers could be properly processed and charged. This was the only bus with criminal charges, though there was apparently a plan to intercept the other buses when they returned to Montréal; fortunately, the sympathetic bus drivers dropped people off at different locations than originally planned. At the station in Victo, people on the McGill/Concordia bus were kept in the vehicle for ten hours, under the watch of armed SQ guards that patrolled the aisle and prevented people from speaking.

Although the Liberal Party convention was delayed, the event was not canceled. In fact, since everyone had left town at the end of May 4<sup>th</sup> and no one was interested in spending another second there, the rest of the convention saw no confrontational protest whatsoever, only colorful signs. For those interested in direct action, this could be seen in a positive light. The point wasn't simply to protest what the Liberals were doing, but to breach the Hôtel le Victorin and physically engage with some of the people who are fucking us over in concrete ways. People made a strong effort to do so on Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, and were no longer capable

of doing it afterwards, going home to lick their wounds—a much better use of time than hanging around ineffectually.

Another lesson of the Battle of Victo: as long as militant resistance remains concentrated in Montréal, it is doomed to failure. In this particular city, it is normalized, to the point that it can be factored into the authorities' strategic calculations. Obviously, they intend to put an end to it eventually, but if it is contained here in the meantime, it is much easier to control. Whenever there are attempts to push the boundaries in other parts of the Québécois territory, there is hell to pay. This was shown not only on May 4<sup>th</sup>, but also in the brutal approach that the SQ used against hard pickets of schools in the Outaouais and the suburbs north of Montréal. Despite this, the capacity to project our power into other regions of the province, and above all to foster cultures of resistance there, is critical for the future.

*Continued on Page 50...*

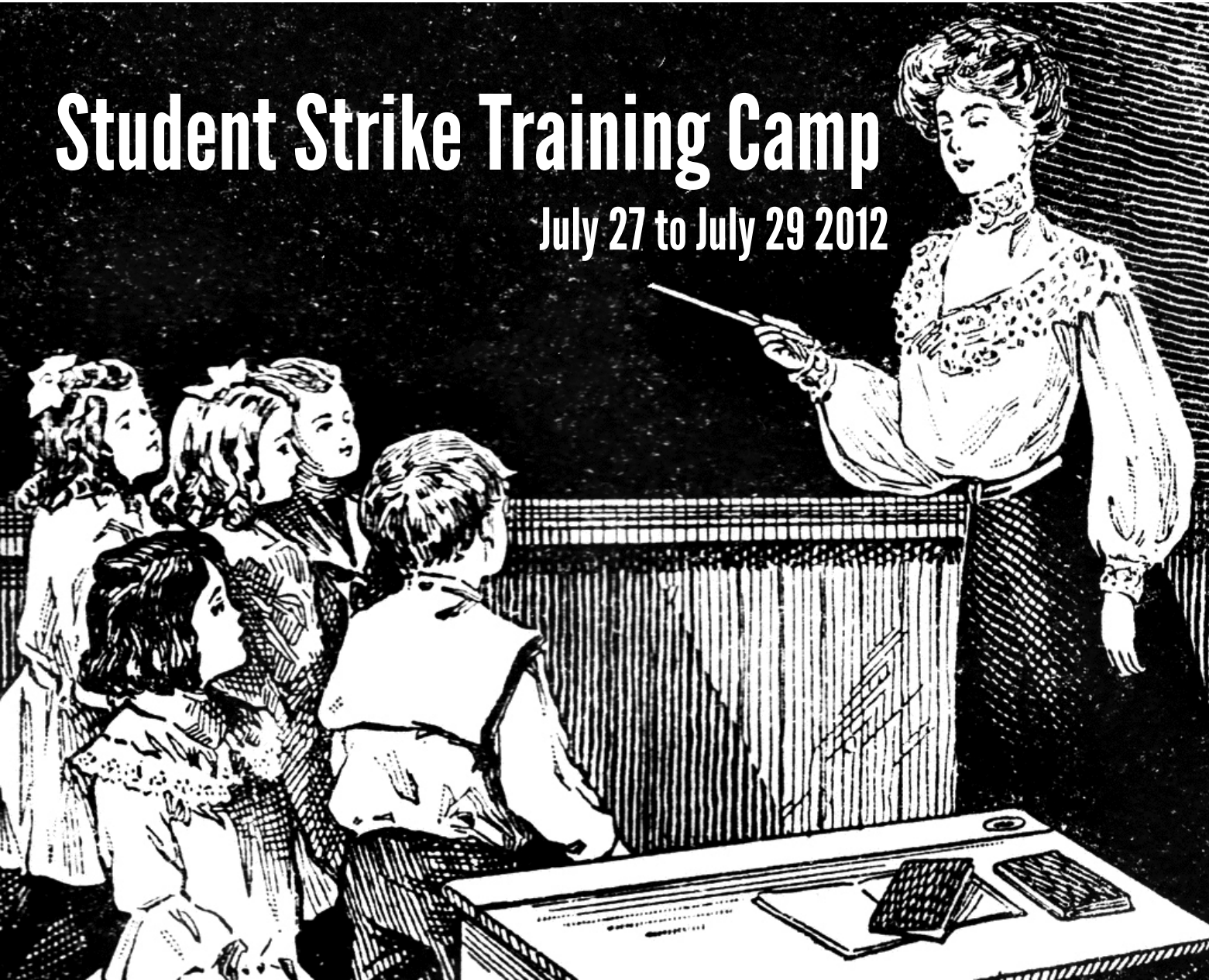
**Photos:** Top Left, Demonstrators fighting back. Top Right, Fighters in the battle of Victo. Bottom Left, Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's: returning a tear gas canister. Bottom Right, A barricade on May 4.





# Student Strike Training Camp

July 27 to July 29 2012



by Juanita Burnett

I am a former student and current part-time employee at the University of Guelph, and the mom of a McGill student. I have been a part of the Guelph Student Mobilization Committee for the last few months, working to find ways to mobilize students (and the rest of the community) and to help them prepare to fight massive cuts and increasing fees being implemented in the name of 'austerity.' We've been reminded over the last year or so especially, that Quebec does not take

these things lying down. Campuses here are starting to wake up and take notice.

At the Anarchist Book Fair this June in Toronto, students from Quebec came together with students and others in Ontario. A cross-Canada speaking tour of the student activists made a number of stops, including here at Guelph. That weekend, there was a Student Strike Training Camp held and largely organized by University of Toronto student activists, alongside students from McGill,



Concordia, and Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM).

Saturday morning's topics included an intro to Quebec student strikes, what a student strike is, getting the word out, getting people involved, and mobilizing grad students.

I wanted to find out about how to get the word out. The first point made was that there needs to be dialogue about free and public education. We need to get people involved in the discussion and in a transparent and accountable decision-making process. There needs to be lots of space for debate.

Various ways of getting the word out and raising awareness were discussed: class talks, flyering in high traffic areas, tabling and posterage are all good to start making people aware of the issues, and get them talking about it. Go to the teachers and professors to set up class talks. Be in spaces that may seem uncomfortable at first. As people get accustomed to you being there, they may be more comfortable getting into a discussion. Posters are good for keeping the message in the public eye. Repeating points is important.

Campus and social media can be used for mobilizing, but don't count on them to do your work. Petitions or flash mobs are not that effective in and of themselves, but they can be great for getting people involved. Finding local issues, something that students or community members see affecting them, is a good way to start conversations. Student unions giving a tour at the beginning of the semester could let students know who and what they are. Workshops and organized debates could be effective.

As more people become aware and ready to get involved, bigger actions can be planned. General Assemblies (GAs) are a really important tool to discuss and plan actions such as an occupation or a strikes. You need strong support and enough people to carry the action out effectively. General Assemblies are also key to ensure an opportunity for feedback and for

students to feel involved in the movement for accessible education. Strong GAs are good for legitimizing of the movement. Student solidarity is strengthened by healthy debate and an open dialogue.

Strong, regular GAs are really important when looking at a strike (in whatever form it might take). When unions are too large, it is helpful to break it down a bit – go to departments for smaller, more cohesive GAs, and for stronger strike mandate votes. A strong, cohesive, highly mobilized student population is key to strong strike actions.

Topics for the afternoon: moving from general mobilization committees to strike committees, organizing and mobilizing for General Assemblies, creating effective student associations from scratch, radicalizing existing student associations, and self-care- maintaining activist energy in high-stress situations.

In the self-care workshop, one of the first things we talked about was how learning to care for ourselves is a part of creating healthy, sustainable activist communities. There is important emotional work to be done, such as active listening skills, decompressing, and accepting that activism brings its own tensions.

It was stated that often 'we treat each other as soldiers,' expect everyone to just push on, not questioning the idea of 'performance.' If we're trying to change the world, we need to stop acting within the same system and stop reproducing the methods of capitalism. We want to be 'sensible' but don't want to talk about 'emotion'. It's time to reconsider the way self (and other) care is seen in our activist communities.

Sunday morning's workshop options were

**learning to care for ourselves is a part of creating healthy, sustainable activist communities. There is important emotional work to be done, such as active listening skills, decompressing, and accepting that activism brings its own tensions.**

all around making strikes work. The plenary began with a picket line set up by facilitators barring us from getting into the room. It didn't take us too long to break through, but it was a good lesson. We were told that our exercise after lunch was to get our own picket line, and to keep the facilitators from getting in the room.

Topics: effectively enforcing strikes, using strikes to build a movement, direct democracy beyond associations, dealing with repression, the strike as a tactic, and grad student strikes.

In the workshop about dealing with repression, the facilitators went over some of the increasingly repressive events that have happened in Quebec over the last few months which went from a few random arrests or people being detained, to sound grenades and rubber bullets that caused serious injuries to protesters (including blindness and a coma) and the unconstitutional Bill 78 that was created, but hasn't really been tested yet. We did talk a bit about the issue of international students who are often put in a more precarious situation when arrested, and about other effects of police repression on activist culture - threats, fear, control. The point was made that once the system is challenged, everybody is repressed and threatened.

The picket line exercise we'd been asked to do at the morning plenary was incredibly effective after everyone got into it. We used people and movable seating in the lobby to help us block entrances, and eventually moved to block the outside doors as well. Our much larger numbers helped a lot, of course, as did the helpful (though surreptitious) tips by facilitators. We used our numbers, available tools (seats, flyers), and worked on our arguments and counter-arguments to engage and persuade them to see our side. The plenary before the last workshops was delayed quite effectively.

In the last workshops of the day, we talked about the situation in our own schools, and where we are at in terms of mobilization. We talked about ways we

could get active creatively: an invitation to law students to a 'write to prisoners' event, a scavenger hunt during orientation with one of the items being an issue that relates to the department, info picketing/flyering at bus pass or student loan line-ups to get the word out about the necessity for education to be a right, tying a banner about 'ballooning debt' to helium-filled balloons - all good ways to get dialogues started.

### **DEALING WITH THE 'S' WORD**

I came late to the political/activist world, so the idea of a strike is pretty daunting. I don't think I'm the only one. So why focus so much of the training camp on the practicalities of strikes? I think the following three points helped me to see more clearly, and to sum up the entire, incredible weekend.

Starting off talking about a Student Strike gets attention. It's important to keep in mind that the strike is not the goal, but a tactic in the campaign against increased tuition fees or for free tuition. But we need to start the discussion, and a strike gets attention.

Strikes are not common in Ontario. The work at McGill and Concordia (the anglophone universities) is similar to what the conditions we in Ontario are facing re: mobilizing, and organizers' experiences there are incredibly useful to us. Other tactics are straightforward; we understand how they work, and how to implement them. Practicalities such as how to keep a picket line from being breached and how to actually get mobilized enough for a strike mandate from your student body are necessary lessons to learn.

Strikes work. Again, strikes are a tactic, not a goal, but they are the most effective tool we have. Strikes have kept Quebec tuition fees lower than the rest of Canada, and we have to consider them here if there is any hope of getting rising costs under control in any way. *P*



NICIA POLICE





## Maple Spring Part 4: Emergency Measures & Casseroles

### WHILE THE IRON IS HOT PART VI

#### MAY 16–24: THE RULE OF LAW AND THE EMERGENCY MEASURES

**O**n March 30<sup>th</sup>, as a result of legal action by anti-strike students at a small cégep in the north of the province, Québec’s courts had issued an injunction forbidding any demonstrator from doing anything to block a student of that school from going to class. In the following six weeks, at least 38 more injunctions were issued to similar effect. The pickets continued anyway. Notably in Gatineau and Sainte-Thérèse, both outside Montréal, and at the Collège de Rosemont within the city, riot police were called in to break the pickets.

In Montréal, where the fighting spirit was the strongest, the injunctions proved impossible to enforce; there were simply not enough police to go to the schools and keep them open. Perhaps the most notable effort to defy an injunction had taken place on the campus of the elite Université de Montréal on April

12<sup>th</sup>. Hundreds of militants broke into two buildings; thousands cheered as a battering ram was used in one of them. Participants painted graffiti and destroyed computer systems, snipping fiberoptic cables in over twenty classrooms.

With the second breakdown of negotiations between the representatives of the government and the student federations on May 10<sup>th</sup>, it is suspected that Charest and his cabinet began to consider an emergency law to restore order and cripple the movement. A well-publicized incident at UQÀM on Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, is supposedly what pushed the premier over the edge: unable to prevent students from entering the building, one hundred masked militants instead roamed through the campus, entering classrooms and making efforts to prevent classes from taking place, ranging from screaming “Scab!” to physically removing people from classes. Such things had been happening at

UQÀM for months, but with the help of the media, the government seized on the events of Wednesday morning to announce his party's crisis-ending *loi spéciale* on Wednesday afternoon. It was debated in the National Assembly the next day. By midnight on Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, it was law.

Charest's law forbids any kind of demonstration from taking place within a certain distance of a university or cégep campus, and introduces heavy fines for anyone who does anything to prevent students from going to classes: from \$1000 to \$5000 for individuals, from \$7000 to \$35,000 for student leaders or union leaders, from \$25,000 to \$125,000 *per day* for student or labour organizations. It demands that any demonstration of more than fifty people submit an itinerary to a police agency at least eight hours before it begins, and grants the police the power to modify the route however they see fit to prevent threats to "the order and security of the public." For the 11 universities and 14 cégeps that were on strike when the bill was passed, it suspended classes for winter semester, stipulating that those classes would be completed in August and September in a special session. The law is set to expire on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, although it is possible that it could be renewed or that part or all of it might become permanent.

Coming into effect at the same time was the new version of Montréal's bylaw P-6, explained below. Despite the fact that, unlike the Special Law, mayor Gérald Tremblay's law has been used against demonstrators in Montréal consistently since May 19<sup>th</sup>, and despite the fact that these updates to the pre-existing law are permanent, bylaw P-6 has gotten a fraction of the attention from the mainstream media, the revolutionary and reformist left, and anarchists. To be clear, every single demo that has so far taken the streets chanting *ONS'EN CÂLISSE LA LOI SPÉCIALE!*—roughly, "the special law, we don't give a fuck about it!"—has been



declared illegal under the municipal law rather than the provincial law.

Bylaw P-6 was first introduced in 2001, and it stipulates that any demonstration can be declared illegal at the discretion of the police if they have reasonable grounds to believe that it will cause "a commotion" or otherwise endanger public order. It also forbids anyone from bringing blunt objects to demos, naming baseball bats as well as hockey sticks—famously used during the 2001 Québec City anti-FTAA demonstrations to knock tear gas canisters back at police. The first fine under this bylaw originally ranged from \$100 to \$300, with \$300 to \$500 for the second offense and \$500 to \$1000 for every subsequent offense. The new version of the law increases the fines significantly, such that the first offense is now \$500 to \$1000, increasing by the third and subsequent offenses to as much as \$3000. Specifically naming scarves, masks, and hoods, it forbids anyone from concealing their face "without a reasonable motive." Like the Special Law, it necessitates total collaboration with the police, demanding that the complete routes of demonstrations be disclosed to them in advance.

On the evening of May 16<sup>th</sup>, the largest noise demo that has ever occurred in Montréal took place at the Tanguay Prison for Women, in solidarity with the women being held there for their alleged role in the smoke-bombing incident on May 10<sup>th</sup>,

**Photo:** Gallons of paint stain the auditorium floor after an occupation.



mentioned above, as well as everyone else facing judicial repression for the events of the strike. After a massive display of fireworks, calling back and forth with the prisoners for ten minutes, and the release of a smoke bomb underneath an SQ vehicle—as it was the provincial police who were overseeing the event—well over 100 demonstrators returned to Henri-Bourassa métro station, flowed past the cops inside, hopped the turnstiles, and caught a southbound train leaving at the most serendipitous moment possible. A chant of “Berri! Berri! Berri!” started, and people got off at Berri-UQÀM station, joined the night demo, and participated in what was the first confrontational demo of that type in a few weeks. It was dispersed after forty-five minutes, several banks having been damaged.



**Photo:** A bank attacked on the night of May 16<sup>th</sup>.

It was Charest’s announcement of the Special Law on May 16 that heated up the night demos again, not the consistent effort by a small group of anti-capitalists associated with CLAC to oppose Tremblay’s mask law with explicitly pro-mask demos. This shows the problematic consequences of the popular focus on particular politicians as bogeymen. Since at least 2009, Tremblay had been trying to criminalize masks in order to tame the March 15<sup>th</sup> demonstrations, among others; now, he has used the opportunity of the strike to accomplish that and advance his project of turning Montréal

into a respectable city for bourgeois colonizers and transnational capital. Montréal’s city council, though, draws less attention than the ideologically heated National Assembly, nor is the mayor as polarizing a political figure.

Laws themselves can also serve as bogeymen, distracting from the root of the issue. There is a huge tide of popular resentment against the Special Law, which is widely deemed to contravene the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and which is currently being challenged in court. If that law was actually being *used*, this might have the effect of arousing more anger in the population. On the other hand, there is no controversy around bylaw P-6, even though it has been used to repress the movement. In fact, whenever there is outcry on Twitter that “this demo was declared illegal under that fascist special law!” the SPVM has been able to pacify the tweeting intelligentsia with a simple correction: “No, actually, that law was not used. Instead, the demonstration was declared illegal under a municipal bylaw.” It shouldn’t matter under which particular code it was made illegal, but somehow the unwillingness of the police to use the controversial law is seen as a moral victory for those who support the students, even if the same purpose is accomplished with other laws. Anarchists should take note of how many militants have failed to address *law itself* as a weapon that can be employed against us.

The night demo of Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup> was the most confrontational in some time, with pacifist opposition to confrontational tactics much more cowed than had become usual. People were angry. Over the next few days, anarchists from across the continent arrived for the Montréal Anarchist Bookfair, probably the largest annual gathering of anarchists in the territory of the Canadian state. It’s tempting to assume that this influx of anarchists explains why the nights of the bookfair weekend were particularly crazy. In fact, that’s unlikely. For many in

Québec, especially in Montréal, Charest's Special Law represented a shift into *fascism* that they felt it urgent to oppose.

The demonstration on Friday night, May 18<sup>th</sup>, was the third time that Molotov cocktails were deployed against police in the course of the strike. Two were thrown at police at the corner of boulevards René-Lévesque and Saint-Laurent, failing to hit their targets. At that point, the police declared the demonstration illegal and began employing tear gas and flashbang grenades; they only made four arrests during the night, however. The demonstration lasted until 3:30am, with several groups roaming around downtown as well as the Plateau neighborhood a bit further to the north. After the initial clash, much of the night was passive, but not entirely: in the Plateau, banks and other corporate sites were attacked.

Saturday night was marked by a lot of people, particularly bar patrons, joining demonstrators in the streets, as well as a few instances of particularly random and unintelligent violence from the police. On rue Saint-Denis, as they were charging a group of militants, they began beating an older man who could not run fast enough. On the same street, they invaded the patio of Le Saint-Bock, a pub. Some of the patrons on the patio were wearing red squares—hardly uncommon in any crowd in Montréal these days—and a few of them may have berated the police who were attacking militants a few meters away.

There were considerable exchanges of projectiles between police and demonstrators at the gates of McGill University, then at the intersection of rue Ontario and boulevard Saint-Laurent. At the second confrontation, the militants were blocked from continuing south by the police line, but they had an uphill advantage and hailed enormous quantities of rocks on the police. If more riot police hadn't started moving east along rue Sherbrooke—their aim being to block Saint-Laurent from the



north and kettle the demonstration—the demonstrators might well have broken the line on Ontario.

It was only after this confrontation that the demonstration continued east to rue Saint-Denis, where it encountered welcoming crowds of bar patrons. A mix of hardcore militants and drunk people looking for excitement built an enormous bonfire at the intersection of Saint-Denis and Ontario. When the police moved in, people retreated to Berri Square nearby, but were quickly dispersed as the police used an overwhelming amount of tear gas. A total of 69 people were arrested.

On Sunday night, the police were determined to arrest *a lot* of people; there were 308 arrests in total. The demonstration was marked by intense confrontation from the very start, with lots of militants taking the initiative to

**Photos:** Top, Police on Friday night, the weekend of the bookfair. Bottom, Anarchopanda, a controversial figure crying on May 18<sup>th</sup>.



**Photo:** Top, The Bonfire... Bottom, and the cops.

break up concrete and rain stones on the police. The SPVM responded by charging the demo repeatedly in order to split it into smaller, more manageable groups. In one instance, a large number of street fighters found themselves kettled. Rather than submit to arrest, they counted down and charged, breaking out of the kettle. Several of them were injured by police batons, but everyone got away. Unfortunately, many others didn't, including many anarchists visiting from other cities.

These were the nights when many out-of-town anarchists experienced the events unfolding in Montréal for themselves. This was the time when the strike was perhaps the most intoxicating and beautiful, too. The number of people in the streets, the ferocity with which they fought even in the face of the

emboldened and intensely brutal SPVM, the knowledge that some people broke through a police kettle and escaped what would have otherwise been a mass arrest... Notwithstanding how many people *were* arrested and brutalized, these made for some good stories when visitors returned to their hometowns.

In the following days, street demonstrations became more passive, but that didn't stop the SPVM from attacking, harassing, and arresting people. Monday night's passive demonstration saw a brief reprieve from the chaos, perhaps because both militants and the cops were exhausted from the weekend. That demo did little more than walk to Charest's mansion in the rich neighborhood of Westmount, stand in front of it, and chant.

Tuesday, May 22<sup>th</sup>, was the day for the "national" demonstration in Montréal and the 100th day since the strike had begun. An enormous mass thronged the streets—boosted by busloads of militants arriving from Toronto and other cities in Ontario to express solidarity, but above all by the large numbers of people who opposed the Special Law more than they opposed tuition hikes. At the beginning of the demonstration, FÉCQ president Léo Bureau-Blouin called for everyone to follow the route that the organizers had divulged to the SPVM so that people could protest "in all safety." Both CLASSE's contingent and an autonomously organized anti-capitalist contingent refused to obey.

The demo, estimated at 400,000, was impossible to control, even with significant numbers of peace police and (presumably) undercover SPVM officers. Taking advantage of this, street fighters thoroughly destroyed a section of downtown in broad daylight: banks and isolated police vehicles were attacked, and neither marshals nor cops could do anything to interfere. This was the only significant moment of violence



by militants on Tuesday. Later on, when CLASSE's contingent defied the Special Law by leaving the preordained route and attempting to meet up with the night demonstration that was trying to leave from Berri Square at the same time, the atmosphere was not confrontational so much as *ν*. Both the night demo and the CLASSE march were brutally suppressed, with the SPVM reporting 113 arrests that night.

The night of Wednesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, saw the single largest number of arrests of any night in the strike: 506 people altogether, including 30 children who had been banging pots and pans with their parents. This was an almost completely passive demonstration—only a small number of people were wearing hoods or masks, and there were virtually no attempts to fight back despite numerous provocations from the police—but it defied the new restrictions on routes for demonstrations. Casserole demos converged on downtown from the neighborhoods; there were people all over the city. The police, emboldened by new laws and angry about recent events, cracked down hard. This episode puts the lie to the claim that “thugs always get caught.”

There has been a certain amount of debate among anarchists about how much to focus on legal issues. We don't respect the law in any case, right? Yet it's obvious that, since May 19, the confrontational character of the strike has become much less evident. The law affects us. Even more, it affects those who have yet to reject the law on principle, whose participation in the movement and presence on the streets have been so important in creating this moment.

This is a problem, and the most obvious answer to it is propaganda. Anarchists need to present our ideas in opposition to the idea of the law. To start with, if people in Québec want to talk about fascism—and indeed, they're fixated on using that particular term,

*fascism*, to the point that it's useless to try to persuade them to use more precise language—we should shift the object of popular concern away from specific laws or tyrants. Instead, we should highlight the fact that legal codes are weapons to destroy, and that like other weapons, they occasionally need upgrading. We should point out that, in many different places and contexts, emergency laws have outlived the emergency.

Finally, there's the tendency to focus on the Special Law rather than bylaw P-6. If we *are* going to focus on specific laws, we should at least direct attention to the law that is actually being used. The provincial Special Law faces enormous public opposition as well as a legal challenge. Bylaw P-6, on the other hand, is invisible and seemingly benign. Anarchists need to peel back this veneer by loudly defending the practice of wearing masks while denouncing any law, government, or generalized sociopolitical system that seeks to suppress it. Direct-action-oriented anarchists are more likely to oppose the law in the streets than in the courts, but the usefulness of attacking it on other fronts is undeniable.

**Photo:** “This stinks of fascism.” [sic]



## FROM MAY 21 ON: THE RISE OF THE CASSEROLES

It should be clear by now that the movement is not homogenous, and that many questions—about strategy, about ethics, about what is occurring in the first place—have been divisive. But generally speaking, when it comes to issues with which everyone in the movement has to grapple, anarchists tend to find ourselves on the same side. No hesitation about the first-person plural this time: we have rejected the strategy of pacifism; we have rejected “political solutions” and appeals to nationalism; we insist on autonomy in choice of action and solidarity with those accused of using more intense tactics, such as the defendants charged in the smoke-bombing case. There is at least one exception to this rule, however: we do not agree about the casseroles. There is no consensus about how the emergence of the casseroles helped or hindered the fight against capitalism.

Anarchists who view them positively are likely to emphasize that the casseroles

are the most socially visible manifestation of popular rage against Charest’s and Tremblay’s anti-dissent laws. They have enabled the movement to spread into areas and demographics it would not have taken root in otherwise; they’ve also been replicated in cities across

Canada and the world as a gesture of solidarity. They gave rise to popular neighborhood assemblies that bear within them the seed of a different way of making collective decisions. In some places, these assemblies have taken explicitly anti-capitalist positions, and they could initiate struggles against the specific forms that capital takes locally.

Anarchists who view them negatively are likely to emphasize that they emerged precisely when it was most critical for the night demonstrations downtown to maintain numbers. The situation coming out of the bookfair weekend seemed ready to explode, but it didn’t—in part because of the casseroles that, according to some of those who initially spread the idea, were explicitly intended to “lower tensions” and “calm things down.”

Clearly, there were worthwhile things about the casserole demos, particularly the ones that took place in the neighborhoods early on. They brought the strike to many parts of the city all at once, and because they involved large numbers of people and were dispersed geographically, they were difficult to police or control. They provided an accessible means for many people to participate in the movement in some capacity; otherwise, many people might only have read about it in the paper or heard stories from their kids, grandchildren, or older siblings. The original idea was that on May 21<sup>st</sup>, people should bang pots on their front steps, on their balcony, or from their window at precisely 8pm for fifteen minutes: no more, no less. People seized on the idea and transcended the limits of its original conception as a stationary protest; by the night of Wednesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, there were roving casserole *demos* in the streets of Verdun, Villeray, Centre-Sud, Hochelaga, Ville Saint-Laurent, the Plateau, Saint-Henri, and elsewhere. Many of these started in their neighborhoods but eventually made their way to the downtown core, making the situation there all the more uncontrollable.

The casseroles also launched neighborhood assemblies, which offer the potential for people to make decisions with their neighbors that change the character of the place they live. These are still very young; it should be no surprise if some of them die out or turn into even more farcical repetitions of the worst aspects of Occupy Montréal—though



**Photo:** A typical Casserole demo.



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many assemblies have taken measures to avoid its shortcomings. In many neighborhoods, anarchists have put a lot of energy into their local assemblies, which have become explicitly anti-capitalist projects featuring committees dedicated to continuing the strike via direct action. This bodes well for the start of the special semester on August 13<sup>th</sup>.

So the casserole demos made the movement more visible and accessible to people who live in the neighborhoods. What the casseroles did downtown is a different matter. Essentially, they pacified the night demos for a second time. The night demos had emerged in late April as a raucous and uncontrollable response to the truce agreed upon by student leaders without the consent of the membership; it took nearly a week for the police and their de facto allies, the pacifist vigilantes, to impose a certain amount of order upon them. The weekend of the bookfair, militants overturned that order with pitched street battles more ferocious than the night demos of late April. The passing of the new laws, widely described as fascist by movement participants of all political stripes, prevented those who wanted to obstruct physical confrontation with the police from justifying their behavior with pacifist dictums. It is widely understood in Québec that *fascism* must be fought, perhaps even by violent means. It would have been useless for those seeking to calm things down to argue that the new laws were *not* fascist, because—given the hyperbolic political discourse popular in Québec—fascism isn't identified by objective criteria so much as by popular rhetoric. The partisans of pacification needed a new strategy.

This, of course, was the casserole. The word is a francization of the Spanish word *cacerolazo*, which means roughly “the hitting of a stew pot” and refers to a rebel tradition that first became widespread during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile during the

1980s—another situation which many in Québec, but also many people elsewhere, would characterize as fascist. At a time when other forms of resistance could result in the death or torture of militants or their family members, the *cacerolazo* represented a relatively safe way for people to build a visible culture of opposition in Chile—though still one for which they could be punished severely.

The situation in Québec today cannot be compared to Pinochet's regime. No doubt things are bad and getting worse, but people here do not face the risk of extrajudicial execution for engaging in militant confrontations with the police, nor do they have to worry about their relatives being tortured in government jails. Some would like to pretend that the casserole demos have replaced confrontational night demos as the favored tactic of the movement because the situation no longer allows anything else, but that is simply false. They have emerged because certain people want this kind of demo instead of another kind of demo. That is to say, these people want to express dissent with less risk to themselves.

When downtown Montréal is seized by street fighting, signals of disorder appear. Graffiti, broken windows, open fire hydrants, sirens, riot police... All of these make visible the social war that is always taking place in this territory, and they interrupt the aura of stability Montréal needs to attract foreign investment, tourists, and international business conferences. While loud demos that block traffic and adorn the streets with red square stickers can also do that, it is clear that they do it less; they are also less capable of holding their ground when the police want to keep them out of certain areas of the city, and they are easier to recuperate into the business-friendly image of a democratic Québec that welcomes dissent. Raymond Bachand, the finance minister, prefers casseroles to

casseurs; he says he welcomed the new type of demonstration as good news. Perhaps he likes the message they send: that the movement is tired and no longer capable of the kind of economic disruption that could force the government to offer concessions in an effort to restore the social peace.

It should be stressed again that less confrontational demos aren't inherently bad. They are more accessible to people with anxiety or mobility issues, and people who want to bring their kids into the streets without fear of chemical weapons. Casserole demos that start at Berri Square and wander around downtown, however, will never be as safe as demos in the neighborhoods—and the initially large neighborhood demonstrations shrank significantly once the demos at Berri Square started drawing large numbers of people who might otherwise have marched closer to their homes.

In order for the revolt to spread and victory to be achieved, whatever that looks like, we need *diverse tactics* that complement one another. Riots downtown can work well with festive resistance everywhere<sup>3</sup> because they make that festive resistance, which also presents demands contrary to the government's austerity program, look more palatable. But the casseroles' monopolization of the movement has decreased the power of both the confrontational *and* the festive forms of resistance.

Knowing that pacifists do their best to impose their preferred tactics upon every section of the movement, the challenge facing the rest of us is to find ways to keep different kinds of demonstrations

separate, making it clear which kinds of activities are welcome where. It is difficult to define green zones and red zones, for example, when demos are happening every single night, but efforts were being made in June—when, unfortunately, the chaos in the streets began to die down—to associate certain nights with certain kinds of demos. In some neighborhoods, the lack of energy in the nightly casseroles prompted people to pick specific nights of the week to come out in force—Wednesday in Saint-Henri, Sunday and Wednesday in Hochelaga—while ignoring downtown. At the beginning of June, anarchists and others in CLAC attempted to organize specifically *anti-capitalist* demonstrations starting at Berri Square downtown every Saturday night. These were intended not only to welcome a diversity of tactics but also to exclude the fleur-de-lysé flag and marginalize those who wave it. Similar efforts could gain momentum soon.

For anarchists elsewhere, it is important to dispel the myth that simply banging pots together in the streets can create a revolutionary situation. This is obvious, yet pot-banging still seems to be the most common expression of solidarity with the struggle in Montréal. That's great, the feedback is appreciated, but we'd much prefer for people to start *pulling things off where they are* than fetishizing what is for us, in a number of ways, a very frustrating element of the struggle. If you're going to fetishize anything, why not look at the headlines from a few weeks before the casseroles, when manif-actions often paralyzed downtown and drove the police to their wits' end?

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<sup>3</sup> The author does not mean to insinuate that riots cannot be festive.



## Report Back: Shirt Demo in Grand Valley Institute for Prison Justice Day

**O**n August 10th, 2012, upwards of fifty women at Grand Valley Institute (GVI) participated in a peaceful demonstration by donning DIY Prison Justice Day shirts. The action commemorated the defiance of those imprisoned at Joyceville federal prison who, in 2010, wore upside down Canadian flags on their shirt in protest for Prison Justice Day. Such shirts have been banned throughout all Canadian federal prisons.

The women carried out this act in solidarity with all those incarcerated and with the aim of building further solidarity amongst the women inside GVI. This is an inspiring act of solidarity within a prison

culture that usually pits women against each other as a way of maintaining control. They did this in spite of the warden and the head office of Corrections Canada threatening severe repercussions for all the women who participate. The action was coordinated across several pods in both the medium and maximum security sections of the prison.

Love and solidarity for the women of GVI and all imprisoned people!



# Solidarity Against Austerity

by alex hundert

Solidarity against austerity is surely one of the most meaningful rallying calls of our time. The age of austerity is an area in which we will experience some of the most ruthless incarnations of modern capitalism. In order to keep this system as profitable as possible for those who already have the most power, those without will be pushed further and further into the margins making them very easy targets for exploitation and exclusion. The age of austerity will see worldwide cuts to social spending, health care, education and all public services, while markets will continue to be deregulated, rights and protections eroded, and increasing attacks on those who dissent or simply do not conform to dominant norms and identities. For those not amongst the ones on top of this exploitative and dominating system, now is a time to build unity. The future as it is envisioned by the architects of austerity is one that has us passed as expendable, but we can fight back.

I write this from a prison cell, where I am incarcerated for organized protests against the G20 meeting in Toronto in the summer of 2010, when the so-called leaders of the world's richest economies met to formally commit to ten to twenty years of furthering a global austerity agenda. As I write, the students in Quebec are about to return to classes after having rocked the province with one of the most impressive student movements of our lifetimes. On the day of my sentencing, myself and many others in attendance wore the now iconic red square in solidarity with the movement against the raising of tuition. A cut to the accessibility of education is an austerity cut.

One of the things I have thought about many nights is how appropriate it would be for us to build real solidarity between prisoners and students, for it is a common future that we share. Funding cuts are a structural weapon and both students and prisoners are under attack.

Inside prison the impacts of austerity will be felt tremendously. Cuts to community service, welfare, subsidised housing, mental health services, drug treatment and public spending will see more and more people forced to depend on extra illegal sources of income. This will mean that more people will find themselves turning to "crime." Inside prison, the prisons cuts will mean more overcrowding, more lockdowns, less programs and less access to basic rights and so-called privileges. While the new federal Omnibus crime bill (C-10) will cause total prison spending to increase as more people will be locked up and for longer sentences, austerity will see spending per inmate continue to go down, creating ever worsening conditions in the jails, prisons and penitentiaries.

Like most students, most prisoners are young people. Those young people who end up in universities and those who end up in prisons are facing a common future and many of the austerity cuts that have already begun are targeted at both groups. While the impact of those cuts will disproportionately affect those already in prison and the communities they come from - predominantly people of colour and people from poor communities - one of the things austerity will do, while increasing the gap between rich and poor, will be to make more and more communities into targets. The notion of a united fight against austerity implies refusing to allow any communities to be

targeted as expendable or for exploitation or for criminalization; it requires solidarity and it requires fundamental structural change.

One of the most shocking things I have learnt about prison populations - something that should have been obvious - is the ubiquity of the lack of education amongst the prisoners. One third of prisoners in Canada's haven't finished elementary school and two thirds have what is defined as "low literacy levels". A telling symptom of the pervasiveness of this pattern is the fact that despite the minimum age of an adult inmate being eighteen years old, there is no opportunity to require college or university credits in Ontario prisons. Only high school credits or GED (depending on the institutions) are available. People in prison, for the most part, are people whose paths have been filled with so many systemic and structural barriers and oppressive obstacles that so-called higher education has never been an opportunity for them.

At the heart of the battle against increased tuition is the struggle for access to education. This struggle is rooted much deeper in society than at the level of university funding and is actually one in which both students and prisoners are equally embedded. Hopefully students recognize that making education truly accessible requires so much more than lower or free tuition; it requires the societal and structural barriers faced by poor people, by racialized people, by disabled people and others to be dismantled. It also requires changing and diversifying what we teach and how we teach it. Solidarity and the fight for accessible education is not just about support for the student movement, it is about the student movement joining the fight against the structural barriers and societal factors that prevent people from accessing the opportunity to become students in the first place. It is also about all of us uniting to cause fundamental changes in the way we organize our communities

and what we choose to qualify as worthwhile education.

In Toronto, we are seeing public services in already targeted neighborhoods

(Jane and Finch and Parkdale) being closed due to cuts to education funding; these are racialized and poor communities being disproportionality targeted by austerity cuts that make access to the opportunity to gain university education ever more unlikely. Under our current system the less likely a young person is to be able to finish high school, go to university, or get job training, the more likely they are to end up in prison. This should be obvious. At the same time, Bill C-10 explicitly targets both youth and migrants, ensuring that more and more young people of colour will end up in prisons instead of in schools.

Another obvious example can be seen by looking at Indigenous First Nations communities across the country. In most First Nations, where the country's founding treaties and its constitution obliges the government to fully fund education for Indigenous peoples and their communities, education funding and service are woefully inadequate. This does not even begin to speak of all the other types of treaty-mandated funding that federal and provincial governments are failing to pay to First Nations nor to the devastating impacts of centuries of ongoing colonialism, including residential schools, and the ongoing destruction and plunder of Indigenous territories. It is no coincidence that Indigenous people are under-represented in Canadian universities but over-represented in Canadian prisons. It is also no coincidence that Indigenous people are being and will be disproportionately impacted by austerity cuts to government spending. Solidarity with and real

**...making education truly accessible requires so much more than lower or free tuition.**

support for Indigenous peoples' struggles remains a necessary cornerstone of any meaningful struggle in this country.

In Ontario, the current government's strong-arming of teachers unions is part of a broader attack on organized labour, a part of the austerity agenda and an attack on the quality of education for young people in this province. And similarly, Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), the public sector union that represents prison guards will surely get the same treatment when they renegotiate guards contracts later this year. Less shifts for guards and less guards per shift mean earlier lock-ups, less program access, less yard time, more lockdowns and less flexibility in scheduling for prisoners amount to an erosion of our quality of life in here. Just as teachers' conditions are students' learning conditions, guards' working conditions are prisoners' living conditions.

In Quebec, Law 78 was passed by the provincial government in an attempt to disrupt the student movement. Criminalization of dissent is not unique to students. When we define dissent broadly – as acting or being in non conformance with dominant ideology or identity- we can recognize that dissent by its very nature is always criminalized. People of color, Indigenous people, poor people, disabled people, migrants and anyone else whose very identity is a challenge against dominant norms and identity have always been criminalized by this system. This will only increase and harshen as the age of austerity wears on.

One of the lessons I will take home from my experience around the G20, is the common experience of resistance that

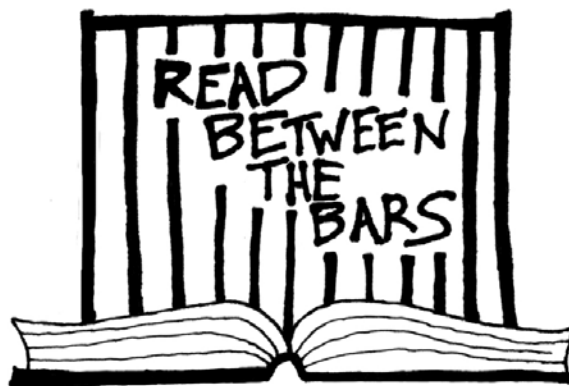
people showed on the streets that weekend in June 2010. There was a semblance of solidarity there, in that riot shared by angry, disaffected and alienated young people; whether they were the students and activists who I met at workshops and planning meetings leading up to the G20 or young inmates I've met in prison since, so many of whom were on the streets or supported what they saw happening there. Obviously the G20 protests were far from ideal in many ways, however it is the only protest that I ever organized that every inmate I have ever met has known about. And almost without exception they seem to support the battle against

the system that was in effect on the streets of Toronto that week.

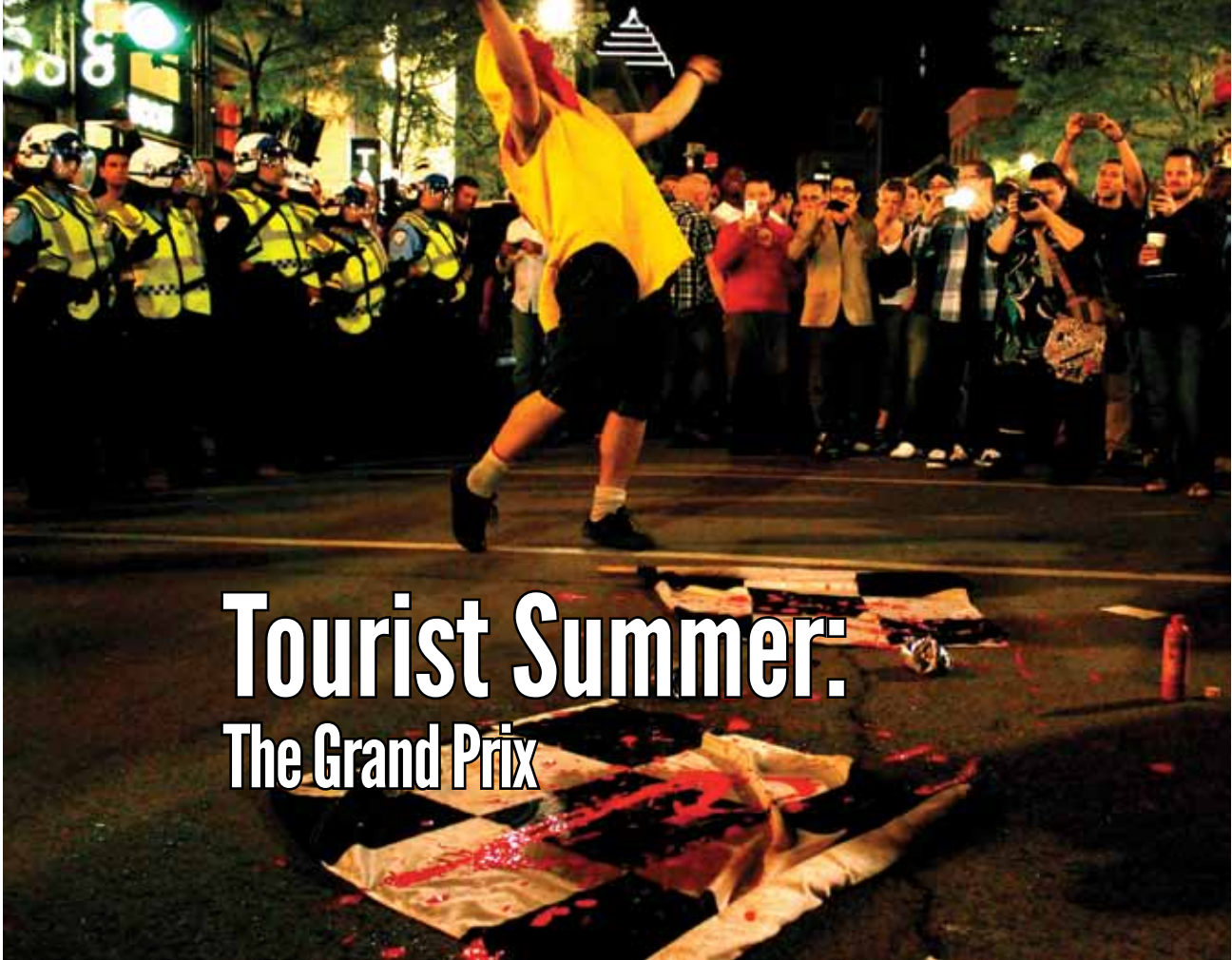
The fight against austerity is just that - a battle against a system. Recognizing

the totality of that system and building solidarity amongst all of us who are targeted by it is a big part of a potentially winning strategy: solidarity with targeted communities, solidarity with students, solidarity with prisoners, solidarity in the streets and in institutions, and solidarity against austerity. P

**The student movement must join the fight against the structural barriers and societal factors that prevent people from accessing the opportunity to become students in the first place.**







# Tourist Summer: The Grand Prix

## WHILE THE IRON IS HOT PART VII

### JUNE 7–10: THE CANADIAN GRAND PRIX

When this report was drafted in the first week of August 2012, the weekend of the anarchist bookfair was the last period of intense confrontation. In comparison, the weekend of the Canadian Grand Prix wasn't half as crazy, but it was more intense than what happened in the weeks before or after it. It is difficult, perhaps ludicrous, to compare different moments in the strike in terms of an undefined *intensity*, but let's do it anyway: the Grand Prix weekend felt more like a microcosm of the time between the end of March and the beginning of April than the period from the end of April to the beginning of May.

To be clear, a sustained and militant confrontation with the police lasting four days, as happened from the afternoon of June 7<sup>th</sup> to the evening of June 10<sup>th</sup>, would have been remarkable at any point before the student strike. For

comparison, the period of March 12–15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was much less militant and involved fewer participants than the Grand Prix weekend, but was considered a very hectic time for the anarchists involved.

In the weeks after the passing of the Special Law and the modification of bylaw P-6, CLASSE stepped back as the main engine of the movement and other groups stepped up, including CLAC and some neighborhood assemblies. During the strike, the activities of CLAC had mostly been limited to distributing propaganda, organizing demonstrations against Tremblay's mask law, and the May Day demonstration. While others dithered, however, CLAC was the first to take seriously a strategy that was being considered in various circles of the movement: to disrupt Montréal's festival and tourism season. They did this by organizing a demo with a very confrontational discourse for the opening ceremonies of the Grand Prix weekend



on Thursday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, and called for disruption of the Grand Prix in general.

The Canadian Grand Prix, part of the Formula One World Championship, is the biggest tourist event of the summer in Montréal. There is something to be said about how Bernie Ecclestone, perhaps the most important person behind the F1 franchise, is a despicable misogynist and racist whose open sympathies with historical fascist leaders are well-documented. It's also worth mentioning that militants in Bahrain had called for the cancellation of April's Bahrain Grand Prix, part of the same franchise, because that event would benefit no one but the brutal regime in that country. Many militants here have been inspired by anti-capitalist and libertarian currents in the Arab Spring, and some are directly connected to struggles in that part of the world, so there was a strong push to express solidarity with the Bahrainis' struggle. The most obvious motivation,

however, was that the Grand Prix is a repulsive spectacle that generates huge profits for rich people in Québec and elsewhere while providing no benefit to most people here.

In fact, for many who live in Montréal, it is one of the most obnoxious times of the year. Downtown, bike lanes are closed, there is extra car traffic, and there are throngs of tourists and salespeople trying to sell them things. Much of this is concentrated on and around Crescent Street, where the local business association claims that "Crescent Street has always had a special connection with racing and cars." This is the site of the LG Grand Prix Festival, featuring musical performances and augmented beer sales for the street's bars.

The Grand Prix and associated festivities were an obvious target. People hoped that a successful mobilization would give the struggle the spark it needed to ignite again and stay fiery all summer.

**Photo:** mostly naked, but many participants still choose to conceal their faces with masks during the Ma-NU-festation.





Photo: A widely circulated image of Yalda Machouf-Khadir being arrested early on June 7.

On the morning of June 7<sup>th</sup>, several people were rounded up in police raids, including Yalda Machouf-Khadir, an anarchist who is also the daughter of a prominent left-wing politician. She and her partner—who are now being charged for crimes at the Université de Montréal on April 12<sup>th</sup> and at the education minister's offices the next day—were arrested at her family's home and subjected to a great deal of media attention; journalists had been tipped off, so they were ready to take her picture as she was taken out the door in handcuffs. The timing of these arrests was clearly intentional: they were designed to intimidate militants and discourage large demonstrations later in the day. It is unclear how well this worked, but the crowd that gathered to participate in the CLAC-organized demonstration that afternoon was the smallest that had been seen for such a widely-publicized event in months: only several hundred people.

The target of CLAC's demonstration was a rich bastard's gala being held in a converted industrial building in the Little Burgundy neighborhood. It started at the corner of rues des Seigneurs and Notre-Dame, about two blocks from the target. Starting so close to the event was a strategic mistake. In what is probably the most open, alley-riddled, and courtyard-profuse neighborhood in the entire city, the demo gathered at an intersection that was already blocked to the west and south by riot police behind metal barricades, making it easy for lines of riot police to

move into the streets leading north and east and create a kettle.

That is exactly what happened fifteen minutes after the demo was set to begin, at which point it was still immobile because people were still trickling in. Very few people were arrested, but there was a considerable pile of black clothing, fireworks, and makeshift weapons left in the middle of the crowd, all of which were confiscated. All in all, it took about an hour and a half for the kettled people to be released.

The autonomous neighborhood assembly of Saint-Henri, the neighborhood directly west of Little Burgundy, had organized a neighborhood contingent to march the short distance from Saint-Henri's eastern limit to the CLAC-designated meeting point in safer numbers. This contingent, probably consisting of less than 50 people, gathered on the open grounds adjacent to the Lionel-Groulx métro station—a large area that, like Berri Square, would have been very difficult to kettle. If CLAC had started the demo at this location or some other open area a little further from the target, it would have been harder for the police to repress it. It is clear from the amount of material that had to be abandoned at the intersection of Notre-Dame and des Seigneurs that people were prepared for a significant confrontation. The beginning of a demo is always the most vulnerable period, and the SPVM was able to disarm the crowd because it began in such a vulnerable location. If the demo had been able to get moving, the open layout of Little Burgundy would have caused the police significant problems, not necessarily at the heavily-defended target building but perhaps on the commercial rue Notre-Dame and certainly downtown once the crowd joined the demonstrations going on there.

Although several hundred people were kettled, others were not. They marched around the residential parts



of Little Burgundy, disrupting traffic and occasionally dragging things into the street. At one point, the crowd surrounded a police cruiser, forcing it to speed away as quickly as possible, and gave chase. Besides this, little happened until the kettled crowd had been released and everyone assembled to march toward Crescent Street downtown. A short battle ensued with the unarmed police guarding the southern entry to the street where the greater part of downtown's official Grand Prix festivities take place, and people stayed in the streets until midnight, joining up with the night demo and also the *ma-NU-festation*—naked demonstration—that occurred that night.<sup>4</sup> Despite the earlier disarmament of the crowd, street fighters still had fireworks and boat flares to use against the police; though they weren't able to approach Crescent Street again, disruption and property destruction took place throughout central downtown.

On Friday night, a demonstration—once again, much smaller than it should have been—set out from Berri Square and headed west towards Crescent Street. The SPVM tried to block all entry to a vast section of the downtown core, preventing the crowd from moving north of boulevard René-Lévesque for a long time. The crowd moved west along René-Lévesque; at rue Guy, the SQ attacked with rubber bullets and flashbang grenades, forcing people to retreat back east. They finally breached the police lines at Dorchester Square, a large open area which the police could not effectively line the entire way; most of the crowd made it through north to the crowded rue Sainte-Catherine, from which they were able to proceed west to Crescent Street. At the corner of Crescent and de Maisonneuve, one street north of Sainte-Catherine, the crowd stood around chanting slogans and failing to drown out a musical performance taking place a few feet away before the police pushed them out.



**Photo:** A *ma-NU-festation*.



**Photo:** Police under attack on June 7.



**Photo:** Fireworks explode during the Grand Prix demonstrations.

<sup>4</sup> Pro tip: tear gas or pepper spray is very unpleasant on exposed genitalia.



**Photo:** shoving with the police during the Gand Prix protests.

Saturday night, the police were even less successful at preventing people from penetrating the areas rife with tourists. People continuously took the streets, pulling fences into them to use as barricades and generally causing havoc. The police responded with pepper spray and tear gas, severely affecting many tourists and other bystanders who were passing through or watching events unfold. It was militants, of course, who treated these people with the medical supplies they had on hand. Several stores and police vehicles were attacked, including two cars parked outside the hotel where the Montréal conference of the International Economic Forum of the Americas was scheduled to occur the next day.

Sunday was fairly quiet on the streets, both during the day of passive protests

against the aforementioned conference and at night.

Throughout the weekend, political profiling was the norm in the streets of Montréal and especially in the métro system, with the SPVM reportedly on heightened alert for any activity that might have sabotaged the transportation of people to and from the race site on île Sainte-Hélène—an island accessible only by bridges and the métro's Yellow Line. People wearing red squares were routinely harassed; if they took the métro line heading to the island, they were sent back to Berri-UQÀM station. There, they were issued fines for "loitering on the train," on the grounds that they went one place and immediately returned, or else told that they were banned from Berri-UQÀM station for life. One person was reportedly kicked out of the métro system because she was reading aloud from



George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four; when she had the audacity to walk back into the métro, she was arrested and held without charges for the rest of the day.

In some respects, the mobilization against the Grand Prix was a success. Dave Stubbs of *The Gazette* wrote just before the weekend that “for the first time in memory, this weekend’s 43<sup>rd</sup> Formula One Canadian Grand Prix is not expected to be sold out”—and indeed it wasn’t. The economy was hurt, and the effects have continued over the course of the summer: in early August, it was reported in all the major newspapers that Montréal saw significantly fewer tourists in July than it had a year previous.

Yet the Grand Prix weekend did not succeed at recreating the spring in the summer. It was a brief period of heightened confrontation in a quiet phase. Of the many theories as to why

momentum has died down, none is conclusive, and most lack analysis. Even before the strike, revolutionary activity has tended to die down every summer in Montréal; perhaps it isn’t surprising that this summer is quieter than the previous spring, though far wilder than the summer before. That’s no excuse, especially when our enemies aren’t taking time off from gathering intelligence, planning, and preparing materially for the coming confrontations. In light of the conditions being endured by certain comrades and the very real possibility of prison time, this situation is even less acceptable. But if the movement isn’t crushed in one year, the Canadian Grand Prix next summer may be disrupted even more significantly. ¶

*For the conclusion, continue to While the Iron Is Hot: Anarchist Analysis of the Revolt in Québec on Page 72*





*underground by artactqc.com*

## Conclusion: It's only the beginning!

**A**t the time of writing, the continuation of the student struggle in Québec seemed all but uncertain. With general provincial elections taking centre stage, there is an opportunity to send the Charest Liberals packing and put to power the less-antagonistic PQ opposition, but many students are also wary of the risk that channeling the momentum of their mobilization into institutional politics will stop their efforts short by disrupting the favourable balance of forces created through the strike and

maintained by constant mobilization.

In the lead-up to the return to class scheduled on the week of August 13<sup>th</sup> for campuses on strike, the combined force of electoral politics and repression seemed to be taking their toll on students, with associations voting to go back to class in a number of colleges and university departments. While it was too early to tell at the moment of writing which way the wind was blowing, it appeared appropriate to reflect on the way forward, both for students in Québec and elsewhere

in Canada.

Whether the students choose to maintain the strike and actively defy the Special Law, whether they are successful or not in thwarting state repression and keep mobilization going, and whether or not the Liberals are brought back to power... One thing is for certain, what has happened on the streets of Montreal, Québec City, Sherbrooke, Hull, Rimouski and dozens of other cities across Québec has forever changed the socio-political landscape in the province, potentially in the country as a whole. What we have witnessed this year will certainly go down as one of the greatest moments in contemporary Canadian history.

Hundreds of thousands of youth have abruptly broken into the static political scene, laying bare a profound reality of injustice, misery, impending social decline that the political class, the opinion leaders and popular cultures, had until now so successfully hidden away or compartmentalized, in order to keep the illusive dream of prosperity and social harmony alive.

These young protesters smashed the worldview of conventional commentators diffused all over the mainstream media, most notably the vile, condescending vision of our generation as being apathetic, individualistic and hedonistic. These pundits and the interests they defend are still at a loss to explain what has happened. These students boldly stepped out of their comfort zone to shake the foundations of a society they have identified as profoundly corrupt and unjust, at the risk of drawing social criticism. Many will indeed pay a steep price for daring to challenge the status quo out in the open, but many more know that this price will be nothing compared to the consequences of inaction.

This is increasingly obvious to everyone, as the state finds it more and more difficult to hide the growing cracks in the system. Misery is spreading across the world, and we have yet to see, or imagine, the worst that is to come. From Greece, to Spain, to

Mexico, to the United States, the impact of systemic crisis is being felt by more and more people. Perhaps the most important lesson Québec students want to drive home, is that only through organized collective resistance can the people ultimately win the day.

### **TOWARDS A SOCIAL STRIKE**

And so, whatever the outcome of the return to class or of the elections in Québec, we must not let ourselves feel down from any perceived defeat. The gains from this struggle are too great to be left to go to waste. We now have a model to analyze and emulate in our own way; we have an idea of a way forward to give us hope.

In Québec, the foundations are being laid for a social strike. The workers, inspired by the student revolt, are more and more ready to take radical action as they struggle for their future. But as the students and workers in Québec prepare for the next round of mobilization, they realize they cannot do it alone; the rest of Canada needs to stand up. In the words of a student organizer from McGill University, "We need you to get out in your streets and we need you to show that we're not the only people capable of putting up a fight."

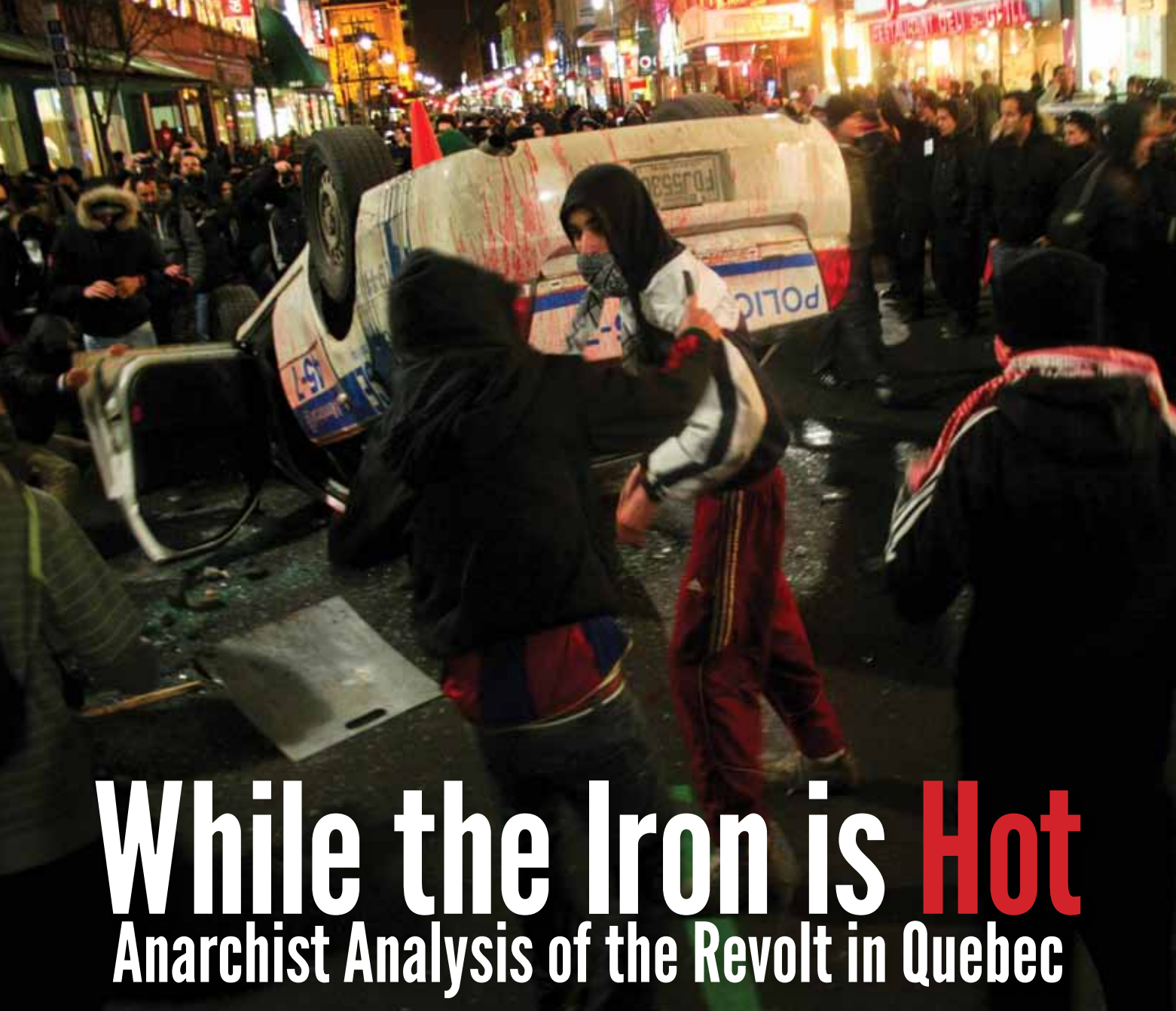
In the face of the mounting disillusion people have towards our social institutions and the future, it is time for something new in Canada. It is time for audacity.

Students have what it takes to lead this new adventure: they have the youthful energy, rebellious spirit, and the hunger for new experiences.

We can all bring this together and form a part of something more important than whatever we can individually aspire for. We can shape society the way we want it, we can make history! *P*

**We now have a model to analyze and emulate in our own way; we have an idea of a way forward to give us hope.**





# While the Iron is Hot

## Anarchist Analysis of the Revolt in Quebec

### WHILE THE IRON IS HOT PART IIX

To fill out our chronology of the unrest in Québec, we have published online the following questions posed to our Montréal correspondent, who answered them with the assistance of other participants in the *Printemps érable*. The interview concludes with an epilogue bringing the action up to the minute, when a convergence to block the resumption of the semester is about to begin [August 13<sup>th</sup>].

It's important to acknowledge that, while the strike has had effects throughout the province of Québec,

our coverage focuses almost entirely upon events in Montréal. The strike has played out differently in this city, a multilingual and sprawling metropolis with dozens of overlapping anarchist scenes and a rich history of anti-capitalist resistance, than it has in the rest of the province. A large number of anarchists and other radicals inhabit a limited number of neighborhoods in a ring around downtown Montréal, making it an important flashpoint for struggle. *P*

Check it out online:  
[guelphpeak.org/](http://guelphpeak.org/)



# WHAT IS THE SQUARE?

The Square is a free Social Centre and hobby print shop operating with the purpose of developing community, fostering discussions around politics, and having fun.

Located in Guelph's downtown core, The Square is funded entirely by donations from the people and groups who use the space.

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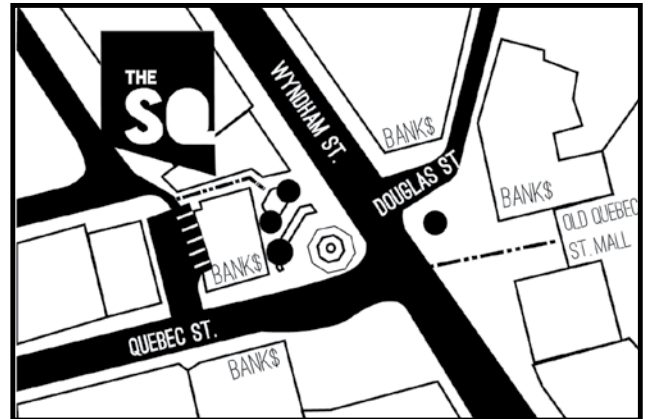


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WWW.THESQUAREGUELPH.COM

							1	2
							8:00PM LABOUR OF LOVE HIP-HOP SHOW	8:00PM RISE UP SINGING MUSIC JAM
3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
LABOUR DAY (NO EVENT)	7:30PM PUNK ROCK MOVIE NIGHT "69"	7:00PM RUNNING WORKSHOP	7:00PM QUILTING AS CHARGED	7:00PM STUDENT STRIKE PRESENTATION	2:00PM LETTERPRESS DEMONSTRATION	8:00PM "BLANKET TRUTH" FOLK-POP SHOW		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
1:30PM PARENTING READING GROUP 7:00PM WRITING TO PRISONERS	6:30PM BOOK BINDING 101	PRIVATE EVENT	8:30PM BOOT BLACKING WORKSHOP	7:00PM MEN AGAINST SEXISM: RAD. PRISON GANG PRESENTATION	2:00PM QUEER COLOUR BOOKS EVENT 7:00PM LEONARD PELTIER EVENT	4:00PM ANARCHY 101		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
7:30PM "SCREAMING QUEENS" QUEER MOVIE NIGHT	2:00PM PUNK ROCK MATINEE "HOOT" 7:00PM BECOMING ANIMAL DISCUSSION	PRIVATE EVENT	7:00PM CANADIAN MINING IN MEXICO	7:00PM PROPOSALS POTLUCK	7:00PM SUBMEDIA.TV PRESENTATION	1:00PM REALLY, REALLY FREE MARKET 5:00PM WARD WALKING TOUR		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
1:30PM PARENTING READING GROUP	7:00PM LITEROTICA	PRIVATE EVENT	8:00PM "CONSTRUCTION/ DESTRUCTION" FOLK SHOW	8:00PM GEOFF BURNER KLEZMER PUNK SHOW	2:00PM QUEER STORY TELLING FOR KIDS	8:00PM THE FRIENDLY ORGAN: ART EXHIBIT		
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT		

